



Window on Jordan

For Jordanians, 1997 brought the good and the bad

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer

"1997 WAS the best. I passed my exams and received my degree to become a licensed lawyer," said Manal Khasawneh. "But that doesn't mean it was a perfect year. Because during the year I lost three of my relatives in a very short period," the lawyer added.

As the year folds, it is a good occasion to turn back and take a look at what Jordanians had achieved and consider what they have done. "Nothing special, only some hot debates with my mother-in-law and of course with my husband," said a housewife in Jabal Al Hussein. "It's my hus-

band's fault, he is very greedy and doesn't want to buy a separate house to move away from his parents or even to rent another one." But the housewife still hopes that she will convince him to leave the parents' nest in the new year.

Some people judge the year as bad or good by what they have gained. "It wasn't a good year, because I hadn't received any raise on my salary, and at the same time I had more bills to pay, so my debts continued to pile up," a junior employee at a government office complained. "Don't forget that Ramadan has started and when it ends we will have Eid Al Fitr, so my budget will never cover our rising needs," the employee added.

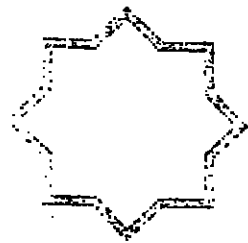
But if you are working and still can't manage how about those of us who are unemployed. "I used to work for a weekly newspaper, but the owner didn't pay us for the last three months," said Hassan Al Tamimi, a photo-journalist. "I took my case to the court and I'm waiting for its verdict. So how can I describe 1997? I didn't get my wages. My job has disappeared and I am a permanent visitor to the court," the photographer continued.

But not all people have the necessary needs to fulfil. Rima, a student at the University of Jordan, sadly told *The Star*. She is not satisfied with the last year because "I asked my father to buy me a

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The Star



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AMMAN, 1-7 JANUARY 1998, VOLUME 8, NUMBER 32, 350 FILS

أسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

New Year strike averted Last minute deal appears to satisfy petrol stations owners' demands

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

THE NEW year could have started on the wrong foot for millions of Jordanians if the members of the Association of Petrol Station Owners and Distributors went on strike. Thursday, the first day of 1998. However, both the Association and government appeared to have reached a last-minute settlement over commissions dispute and thus the strike was called off late Wednesday.

However, the Association has refused to say what kind of a deal has been reached with the government.

The government has relatively responded to our demands," Mohammad Al Qaisi, president of the association, told *The Star*. But he refused to elaborate on his statement. He added that the Council of Ministers announced details of the deal after its regular meeting next week.

But Al Qaisi confirmed that a strike would not take place today, Thursday, 1 January.

Such a strike could have meant an effective halt to the sale of gasoline, kerosene and cooking gas to the general public. Observers feared that it could have also created chaos. In fact they argued that the public had already started to feel agitated. The strike would have led to shortages of cooking gas and heating oil.

The two-year-old dispute between the association and the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Co. (JPRC) over commission structure finally reached a climax earlier this week when the Association threatened to strike on Thursday if its demands were not met.

"We want our rights, and stopping work is not an end but a means to an end," Al Qaisi told *The Star*.

Currently station owners and distributors are allowed a 1 percent commission from the



People stocking up on heating fuel, Wednesday

refinery on sales, while the lowest commission in the world, according to Al Qaisi, is 5 percent. "And that is what we want."

He said that studies prepared by the association have proved that petrol station owners have been losing at a rate of 3.7 percent annually, while return on investment was in the negative by 26 percent.

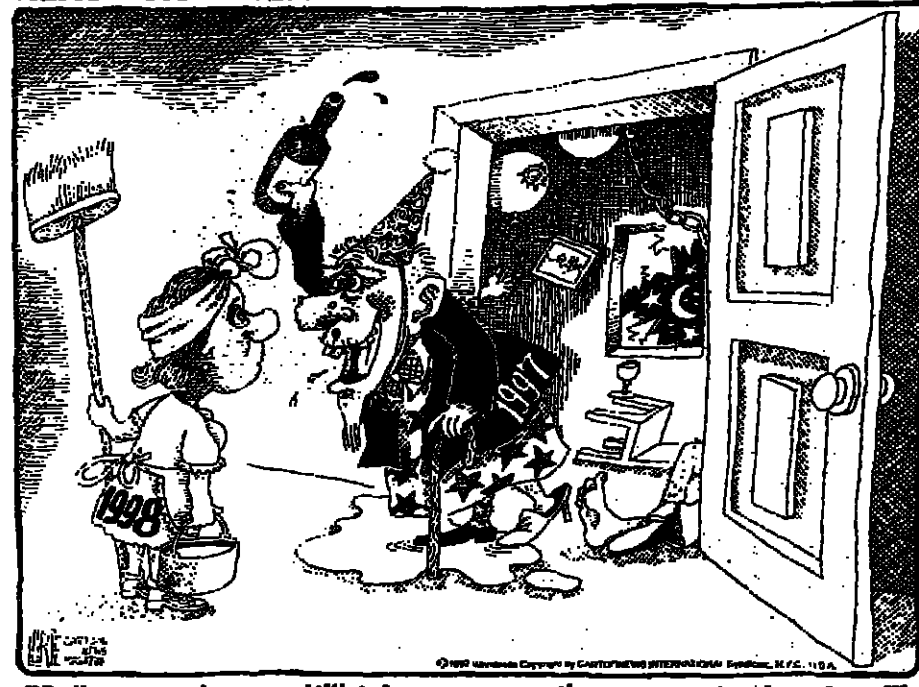
"We gave the Ministry of Energy enough time to study our demands and take up a suitable decision," Al Qaisi said.

The Association decided to go on strike, but delayed its action upon assurances given by the Ministry of Energy, that it will recommend to increase the commission and refer the issue to the government. But as talks continued until late afternoon, Wednesday, the association and its members were bracing themselves for Thursday's strike.

But Al Qaisi said the door will be open for negotiations and "we can call off the strike

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Lurie's NewsCartoon



Shaping the Sphinx to look more like the ruin it is

By Ann LoLordo
GIZA PLATEAU, Egypt—The newly restored Sphinx has neither the nose nor the head that once graced its massive stone head. It hasn't had a complete set of facial features at least since a Muslim mystic damaged the face of the Sphinx in the ninth century.

So Egyptian antiquity authorities left the nose and beard out of the \$1.6 million restoration newly completed this month. To restore the features would change the statue's historical character, says Zawi Hawas, supervisor of the Great Pyramids complex outside Cairo. "We would have another Sphinx. The Great Sphinx of Giza is a ruin and it should be kept as it is."

As the scaffolding that has surrounded the Sphinx for 17 years comes down, the famous visage retains its scars, but the lion body has been shored up and refitted with new limestone. This most recent restoration began in 1989, mostly to undo past shoddy work and refit the stone structure for the future.

"By this work, I can say the Sphinx can live for thousands of years," says Hawas, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. During a recent tour of the restored historic site, "The

Sphinx is really smiling now."

Built by Chephren around 2500 BC, the Sphinx resembles a king and a lion to signify the ruler's divinity. In its 4,600-year-old history, the statue has endured centuries of abuse. Nature took its toll. So too, man. Thieves plundered its limestone structure. Holes have been drilled into the hulking figure crouching in the sand. Cement has been poured into its crevices, chemicals injected into its flaking chest. One work crew brazenly clipped its nails. At least three times—by an ancient king, Napoleon Bonaparte and a turn-of-the-century explorer—the Sphinx was found buried in sand. Each dug it out.

The Romans applied protective stone to the Sphinx's paws and slides during one of the largest renovations and inscribed a plaque to the emperor Nero. At the time, (30 BC to the second century), the Sphinx served as a backdrop for performances and plays. In 1818, four fragments of the Sphinx's head were found.

Archaeologists believe the head broke off naturally; the remnants are housed in the Cairo and British museums.

Archaeologist Emil Baraize arrived at the Sphinx in 1925.

He spent 11 years clearing sand from the statue. He took a series of photographs—226 in all—and documented its deteriorated condition. A crevice big enough for workmen to stand in had opened in the head, according to a 1990 report on restoration efforts. Baraize's work crews poured cement into that gash, only to have restorers that followed undo it to preserve the impressiveness of the Sphinx head, according to Hawas.

A half-century later, Egyptian restorers came up with a unique idea to stop the continued flaking of the Sphinx's limestone chest. They injected a chemical substance into the stone. It was a flop: Two years later, the stone began to crumble. In 1979, work crews applied mortar and gypsum to the stressed Sphinx, even though the materials were known to be harmful to monuments. Two years later, workers slapped new stone onto the original "mother rock." In the process changing the Sphinx's proportions, according to the 1990 restoration report.

Ancient stones that were removed were neither recorded nor saved. A wall was built on the north side of the monument.

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Saudi kingdom completes quiet transition of power

By Robin Wright
RIYADH, Saudi Arabia—Two years after Saudi Arabia's monarch suffered a serious stroke, the kingdom has all but completed a quiet but decisive transition from ailing King Fahd to Crown Prince Abdullah, a shift altering issues ranging from Gulf policies to US relations, according to Western envoys in the kingdom and American analysts.

"Prince Abdullah, who was for decades a man of the future, has recently very much become the man of the hour," said a former US official with continuing ties to the region. "It's increasingly unacceptable to do important business without going to him first," the former official said. "Even important Aramco (the Saudi oil company) correspondence is now signed by the crown prince for the king."

Significant changes in policy are already visible, most notably in economic policy. There is now new emphasis on austerity previously unknown in the oil-rich nation—with a rippling impact on allies. To help balance the budget, for example, Prince Abdullah is prepared to forgo some of the expensive US military equipment and technology that poured into the kingdom for a quarter of a century—and channeled billions of petrodollars back into American coffers, according to the diplomats and analysts, who include former government officials.

The transition also is beginning to shift Saudi Arabia's approach to central diplomatic and security issues. As the kingdom reaches out diplomatically to engage regional rivals once viewed as threats, including Iran, Saudi Arabia ultimately could become less dependent on the US military, the sources say. "These have always been two very different men," a Western envoy in Riyadh said about the king and his half-brother. "Enough time has now passed to be able to see the differences." The crown prince was initially hesitant to make decisions for fear of crowding King Fahd, who tem-

porarily appointed Abdullah to act on his behalf after a stroke in 1995.

The king is in his mid-70s. Abdullah is just two years younger, but he is in far better health. King Fahd officially resumed power several months after his stroke, but unofficially continued to rely on Prince Abdullah because of continuing health complications. "He has been suffering from memory loss and limited powers of concentration for years," said Simon Henderson, author of a report for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The king still receives visiting dignitaries, such as US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and South African President Nelson Mandela last month. But privately, diplomats say King Fahd's capabilities now vary seriously from day to day. The transition increasingly will be felt in Washington, the sources say, although not necessarily in negative ways. King Fahd, who served in several cabinet posts before becoming the fifth Saudi king and who masterminded the modernization of the country, is largely responsible for upgrading relations and then linking Saudi security to the United States.

Although major decisions usually involve family consensus, King Fahd widely is said to have decided unilaterally in 1990, during talks with then-US Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, to allow half a million American troops into the kingdom after Iraq invaded Kuwait. King Fahd also spent \$1 trillion to build a national infrastructure and a modern army almost from scratch. Central to those efforts were US corporations, including airplane manufacturers, telecommunications companies, architects, health care and construction companies. Saudi purchases became so critical to the US arms industry that certain equipment, including one of the most modern tanks, would not have been cost-efficient without them.

In contrast to King Fahd, Prince Abdullah's main responsibility for the past 30 years has

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New year and millennium predictions

By Eustacia von Hubble

THE YEAR, 1998, will be a peach of a year, a lull, peaceful, or practically so; prosperous, mainly; and relatively free of famine and war. As a result, it will be a year almost entirely devoid of "news," whatever that used to be.

Here and there, however, 1998 will contain important moments, even if their significance is not fully grasped until humankind has embarked on the journey of hope, fear, horror and joy that will be the 21st century.

It will be a spiritual year not in a narrowly religious sense, but in terms of events that celebrate the imagination and potential of the people of Earth. We are reaching for the stars. Soon, our space-children will wander wonderingly towards the big-city lights at the centre of our galaxy.

Believe it or not, 1998 will be a red-letter year in our colonisation of space. Other notable

events will include a quickening of our adoption of cosmological paganism: the finals of the soccer World Cup; end-game moves towards the introduction of European monetary union; and the debut of digital television.

My own professions are those of mathematician, astronomer and exobiologist. However, in compiling this almanac I was fortunate to be able to consult the FT's Michael Thompson-Noel, whose interests overlap indeed, outstrip my own.

He is an authority, for example, on the shadowy terrestrial terrain where sport, geography, politics and corporatism collide with shuddering force. Without his help and vision, this almanac would have been a poorer thing.

The year 1997 produced numerous spurious claims that established religions were enjoying pre-millennial revivals and mass conversions. The world was turning back to God. There was the "Diana Prophecy," for exam-

ple. Last May 18, Ginny Burgin, 43, wife of a Sheffield (north England) taxi driver, says she received a "mental image" of a Britain in mourning, its streets carpeted with flowers. In the aftermath of last August 31, following the gruesome death of Princess Diana, Mrs Burgin's "mental image" was promoted by evangelical churches into a full-blown prophecy.

Yet religious revivalism will be doused in 1998. Instead, the move to modern, cosmological paganism will strengthen. The attention of new-age movements, such as those found multiplying in the weirder reaches of the internet, will increasingly turn from mere comets and asteroids to the stars Beta Pictoris, Fomalhaut, Epsilon Eridani and Vega. These stars, only a few dozen light years from Earth, were recently declared to be (possibly) inhabited by alien life.

One of 1998's biggest happenings will be the soccer World Cup tournament. In France, running from June 10 to July 12, A record 32 countries will play 64 matches in 10 locations, culminating in the grand final at the glistering

Stade de France in the Paris suburb of Saint-Denis.

Soccer is the world sport, and is evolving into one of the largest businesses on earth. The World Cup finals will be contested by 15 European nations, five African, five South American, four Asian and three from North and Central America, including the US, whose love of boring baseball will be further undermined.

Soccer is becoming a force to rival Hollywood. How has this happened? What does it mean?

"Soccer," my friend Michael told me, "is beyond sport, beyond metaphor, Eustacia. It lives. It breathes. It is a super-organism; the best example, apart from television, of the head-and-circuses syndrome now perceivable at the highest inner-governmental levels."

The early 21st century has some terrible things in store. As a result, governments will strive to distract us with bread and circuses.

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The Star

Wishes its
readers
and the
Jordanian
people a
happy and
prosperous
new year

For Jordanians, 1997 brought the good and the bad

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new car instead of my 1996 model. "I wanted to spend Christmas and the beginning of the year in one of the European countries, but my father was very busy. So was it a nice year? Certainly not!" she said. In another place an old man was sitting in his shop watching the faces of pedestrians. He told *The Star* that he is a very curious person. He likes to stare at everyone specially his customers. "I know it's a bad habit but I can't quit." For the shopkeeper 1997 was not a smooth year since he ran into many troubles because of his unpleasant habit. "Two months ago, a young couple came to my shop and I began to look at them carefully. But unfortunately, the man thought I wanted to court his wife. Consequently, our curious friend escaped from a beating only with the help of other customers. "1998 will be my lucky

year, because I will retire from teaching and devote all my time to the family," said Basma an English teacher in a public secondary school. "In the meantime, I can't forget the blessing of 1997 since I had my lovely daughter, Hanan, who is now four-month-old." So with another baby, the school teacher now has five children to look after. That's why she is looking forward to her retirement. "1997 and 1998 mean a nightmare for me," Hanan, a student at the end of her secondary schooling, said. "For me life is *Tawjili* and from the beginning of the semester till now I haven't had one day off. All I do is study and do my homework," Hanan said. "But our big fear will be in the summer of 1998, when we sit for the main exams." Mahmoud Abu Rizq, a businessman, finds 1997 as a holy year since it witnessed the holy month of Ramadan twice. "This event takes place every 30 years," he said. So as

Abu Rizq said, "every good Muslim must make the most of this holy month."

For Jordanian children, to decide whether the year is good or not, depends on how many things they could receive or buy.

"In the summer holiday, my father promised to buy me a new bicycle but he didn't," Ahmad, 10, said. While he was playing football with his friends, they came together and in the same manner began to complain because of the things they wished to have last year.

One of the boys told *The Star* that he wanted a very expensive ball but instead his father brought another member to the family. "Five days ago, my father came to tell me that he brought me a big surprise and a very dear present," said the boy. "I thought I finally got the ball but his big surprise was a new little sister. Perfect!!!"

Saudi Kingdom completes quiet transition of power

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been commanding the National Guard, a force independent of the defense ministry that is partly charged with the kingdom's security and its economic installations. Through US trainers of the National Guard, he developed close ties to Washington. Several US major generals have served as advisers to him, even during tense relations in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet despite those relations, the crown prince is more of an Arab nationalist, and he is also a more devout Sunni Muslim and therefore less tolerant of non-Islamic practices. Many of his closest advisers are Syrian and Lebanese, and his wife is Syrian.

Prince Abdullah is strongly in favor of security based on regional peace, even with long-standing rivals. Just two weeks ago he became the highest-ranking Saudi official to travel to Iran since Tehran's 1979 revolution.



King Fahd

In a speech to the Islamic Conference summit in Tehran this month, Prince Abdullah called for coexistence with the predominantly Shiite state, which has a vastly different political system. He then proposed Iran-US rapprochement. "I do not think it would be dif-

ficult for the brotherly Iranian people and for a big power like the United States to reach a solution to any disagreement between them," he said.

When queried, he offered Saudi assistance in bringing about talks between the two enemies. The crown prince also differs somewhat on the peace process. "Prince Abdullah is bolder than King Fahd in seeing the benefits of an Arab-Israeli accommodation," but less patient "with the time it is taking to resolve the issue, a former senior envoy to Saudi Arabia said. "The king has been willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the process, whereas the crown prince is not."

Economically, Prince Abdullah wants to balance the budget—forgoing the kind of big-ticket American items his older brother favored. While King Fahd believes that Aramco always will provide for the kingdom, diplomats and analysts say, Prince Abdullah is a pragmatist who is aware that expenses are growing as population grows, yet income is dependent on a finite amount of oil with market-driven prices and quotas.

Among the US products he is unlikely to pursue are 100 F-16 fighters, made by Lockheed Martin, that were discussed quietly earlier this year through the Saudi Defense Ministry headed by Prince Sultan, one of the king's full brothers. A deal is now unlikely because the kingdom is still having trouble paying for Boeing aircraft it already ordered, the sources said.

Corruption has grown worse since King Fahd's stroke, sources said, as profiteers recognize that the crown prince intends to crack down. "Prince Abdullah has a vision of a Saudi Arabia where there are fewer take-offs in the process of doing public business and less padding for the purpose of passing patronage money around to the princes and their proteges," the former envoy said.

The transition is changing Prince Abdullah too. A life-long stutterer and usually less visible than his brothers or hundreds of nephews, he is now visibly at the helm, decisive and at ease with power. Even his stutter has improved. "It's really quite striking," a Western official said. "With growing authority has come self-confidence."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JORDAN W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar



Reshuffle!

Rumors about an imminent government reshuffle appears to have been quashed. A high government ranking official, who preferred to be nameless said that there won't be changes in the government. Dr Majali is not thinking about it just yet, at least not until after the budget goes to the Lower House for discussion. This is due to take place in the middle of this month.

A rumble in the downtown

The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) may have been, to put it mildly, on the rampage in downtown Amman this week. It was reported that some of its officials confiscated the goods of some shop owners and destroyed them. Merchants reacted strongly and said that such action should not be allowed to happen. President of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce said that such behavior was out of order. He added that even if the shop owners were in violation, they should have been warned at first before the officials acted.

Forgeries

The Anti-Narcotics and Forgery Directorate seized JD 160 forged Jordanian dinars of the 20 dinars denomination. The case was transferred to the courts. During the hearing the State Security Court was told that the accused was caught red-handed in one of the streets in Irbid; he works as a cleaner in one of the hotels.

Popular food

The Ministry of supply has decided to allow the flotation of the prices of "popular food" and beverages in restaurants which are unclassified. However, the Ministry said there is a price ceiling to this which it has fixed in coordination with the Restaurant Owners Association. Despite this, a high ranking Source said that the prices of certain "popular" foods like humus, fool and qudria will not be affected. They are fixed at 27.5 piastres for 200 grams. However the new prices for all other popular food is increasing between eight percent to 60 percent.

New boss for JCP

A foregone conclusion. Maybe! The Jordanian Communist Party has elected itself a general secretary, Munir Hamameh over his only other rival, Mazen Hannah. The official spokesman of the party, Old time veteran Yacoub Zayadeen who has been holding the fort since 1986 refused to submit himself for re-election. However, he stays on as a member of the party's Central Committee and Politburo. Dr Hamameh on the other hand, is an economics professor at the University of Jordan.

Shaping the Sphinx to look more like the ruin it is

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even though it wasn't archeologically required.

When a piece of the Sphinx's shoulder came tumbling down in 1988, a public outcry ensued. The Sphinx's deteriorating condition led to the dismissal of the director of the Egyptian Antiquities Department. In 1990, solar-powered equipment was used to determine the extent of environmental damage to the Sphinx, which stands 66 feet tall and stretches 190 feet from its paws to its tail.

No longer a lone sentry in the desert, the Sphinx overlooks a Pizza Hut and the urban sprawl of Cairo. A rising water table, vibrations from air and vehicle traffic, leaking waste water, pollution from local factories, explosions at the local limestone quarry exacerbated its decline. Even the cable tunnels dug to electrify the sound and light show at the Sphinx contributed to the damage.

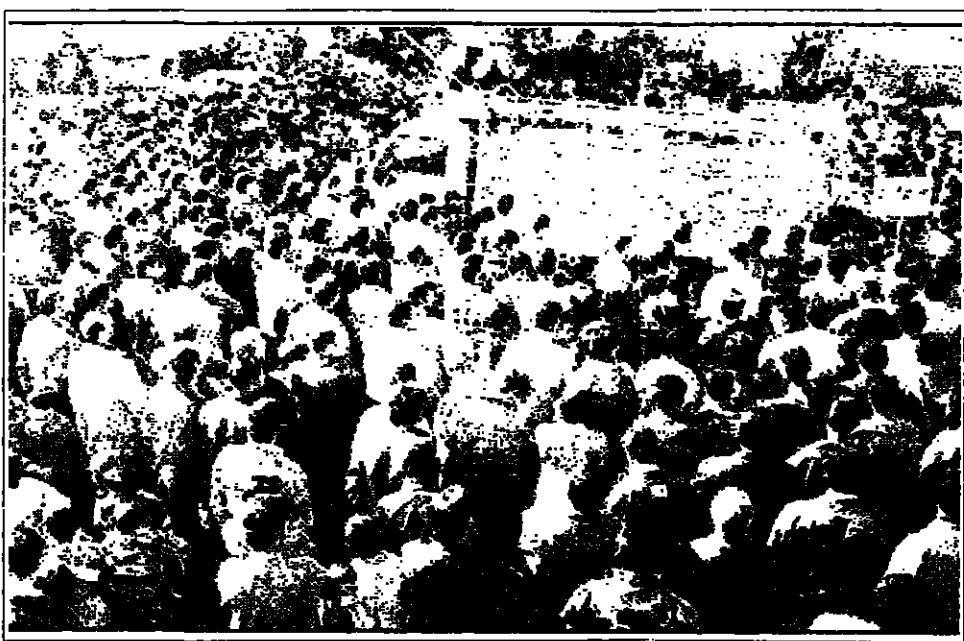
Hawas characterizes previous restoration projects as "stopgap solutions" with no long-term strategy. "Some of these temporary measures even damaged the Sphinx more than benefited it," Hawas has written. "The consequence is that the Sphinx is suffering even more and our work is now all the more difficult."

A team of 90 scholars, historians, chemists, geologists, environmentalists and artists assembled in 1992 to map out the next restoration phase. The project concentrated on the lower portion of the Sphinx. A team of stone cutters has refitted the paws, legs and haunches with about 10,000 hand-shaped, limestone blocks. A special mixture of limestone and mortar was used to anchor the stones.

"The Sphinx is not only important for Egypt but for the whole world," said Nasser Ramadan, an inspector on the Sphinx project. He and others hope the project's completion at year's end will help rebuild Egypt's tourist trade, which suffered a devastating blow last month. Islamic militants gunned down 58 tourists and four Egyptians in Luxor, the site of hundreds of ancient tombs and temples located about 340 miles south of Cairo. Tour companies canceled thousands of trips. Egypt announced recently a new tourism-promotion plan.

"Egypt faced many dark periods," Hawas says, "but it always rises again. The Sphinx opening is like a message to the world: Come to Egypt."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Deputies visit to Knesset seen as major blunder

AMMAN (Star)—More than 5000 people gathered in the Baq'a refugee camp after prayer last Friday, protesting the visit of two Lower House deputies to the Israeli Knesset on 19 December.

The demonstration was organized by the Islamic-led opposition, and the former election campaigners of the two deputies, who felt cheated. Demonstrators raised banners to announce the condemnation of the visit stressing that Muhammad Ra'afat and Hamadah Fareinchi only represent themselves.

The demonstration began after the Friday noon prayer from the Al Quds mosque located in the middle of the camp, a home of about 150,000 Palestinian refugees. The marchers said that Ra'afat, who received 8121 votes, is no longer considered as their representative. "Traveling for Al Aqsa can't be done by an Israeli visa," shouted one banner. This is a hint at Ra'afat whose justification of the visit was merely seen as an excuse.

People in the demonstration described the visit as bargaining with Palestinian children and a betrayal to God, the prophet and all believers.

Former Islamic deputy, Dr Mohammad Oweidah described the visit as a "conspiracy". In his speech addressing the angry demonstrators, he stressed "Our Umma (nation) rejects the visit which exploited the people's confidence."

Oweidah added that such visit was not for Jerusalem nor for Al Aqsa, but to meet with Israeli officials.

Also, according to *Sharia* and *Sunnah*, he said the visit is prohibited as long as the occupation of the land continues.

General Secretary of the Popular Unionist Party Dr Sa'ed Thiyab denounced the visit and called on the Lower House to dismiss the two deputies.

Moreover, he called for their boycott saying that the "Palestine question is one of the sacred issues that should not be trespassed, and its walls

are difficult for opportunists." The demonstration was seen as part of a popular outrage of political and popular sectors in Baq'a who now want him resign his seat from the Lower House. In turn, Sheikh Ra'afat, refused, claiming that his supporters are arranging for a counter rally.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Last minute deal appears to satisfy

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as soon as the matter is resolved.

The government was slow in moving to resolve the crisis. Only when the association threatened a strike did it take the issue seriously.

Meanwhile, Abdul Wahab Al Zubi, general director of the JPRC, said the association's strike decision is unacceptable and will not benefit any party. He said the issue could be resolved through dialogue and negotiations.

If the strike took place, its effect would have been immediately noticed. It's winter and it's Ramadan and people will not be in a mood for prolonged negotiations while shortages of cooking and heating oil continues. Also, businesses and factories will be affected by any gasoline shortages.

The main issue for the public is could any solution to the crisis lead to price hikes? All parties have said that they do not want to see something like this taking place. But it is difficult to imagine a solution that does not involve additional costs to either the refinery or the government—both which will pass the burden to the public.

Dr Mohammed Obeidat, president of the Consumer Protection Society, strongly rejects any attempt to raise fuel prices. "We are against increasing the price of any goods or services," he said. "If the associations' demands are met, people should expect the prices of gas, petrol, kerosene and diesel to rise."

Dr Obeidat said the commission hike that the association is calling for is "too high." He called on association members to review their demands and work out a compromise with the JPRC. But if their demands are met, then Dr Obeidat said that the refinery should be the one to bear the difference in the commis-

Islamists cement differences, but voices in wilderness could continue to haunt movement

AMMAN (Star)—In the last two weeks of 1997 the Islamists finally succeeded in passing over a tough year and appeared to have fully recovered from the scars left after their historic decision to boycott the parliamentary elections.

The elections in the Islamic Action Front (IAF) the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, has produced what observers are saying as balanced results between doves and the hawks. However, they stress that the IAF cemented its internal unity.

The elections to the new 120-member Shura Council of the party has given a minor victory to the moderates, but it was the hardliners who clinched control of the 12-member Executive Council. However, there was a consensus over the post of general secretary, Abdel Latif Arabayt took over peacefully from Dr Ishaq Al Farhan who now heads the Shura Council. All in all, it appeared as a smooth transition since both veteran politicians are doves in the Islamic movement.

The new structure of the Executive Council represents all the trends in the party," Dr Arabayt told *The Star*. "Now it is a solid party [IAF] that will

not be affected by the contradictory opinions," he added.

However the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood is given fresh impetus inside the IAF. Six leading Brotherhood members were elected to the Executive Council of the party. They are: Jameel Abu Baker (spokesman of the Brotherhood), Abdel Raheem Ukour (Deputy Overseer), Salem Flahat, Ahmad Al Kofahi, Hamam Sa'id and So'ud Abu Hafiz.

Regardless of the fact that they are now operating outside the political arena, the priorities of the IAF are many said Dr Arabayt. These include "raising the ceiling of freedoms, reactivating the Constitution and the National Charter and fighting corruption," emphasizing the need for "a national dialogue between all of the different political colors in the country and the government."

However, there was a whiff of dissatisfaction about the outcome of the election from other doves.

Dr Bassam Al Umoush who openly opposed the IAF's electoral boycott decision and later expelled from the party was more somber. "The IAF elections failed to create a new situation for the party." The most important issue, Umoush believes is "the independence

of the party's decision from the decision of the Muslim Brotherhood."

However, observers believe that the big Islamic event is the elections of the leadership and Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood which will be held in the middle of this year. The current leadership of the Brotherhood which abided with the majority decision to boycott last year's elections will face these very same grassroots members again to see whether they were really forced to give a yes vote or they took the boycott decision freely.

In 1998, there will be various elections: Cyprus, Costa Rica, Estonia. Places like that. But none of them will matter. Even the US mid-term congressional elections in November will leave no greater imprint on the face of the planet than the soft fall (in February) of crumbs from Chelsea Clinton's 18th birthday cake.

Peace will reign. There will be no large or middling wars. Even small conflicts will fizzle feebly. Between now and the revival of intercontinental hostilities in 2004, geo-political trivia Bill Clinton's alleged former sex life: Tony Blair's hair; Heilmann Kohl's retirement plans; Boris Yeltsin's funeral will be as much as folk will

New year and millennium predictions

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By 2012, a new Neronic age will be under way, with governments, co-operatively, spending trillions on planetary opiates. Of these, the greatest will be soccer.

"Is there money to be made on the 1998 World Cup finals?" I asked. For my friend is known to have amassed a fortune by betting on sport.

He closed his eyes. Finally, he said: "Germany will win. They can be backed, at present, at 8-1. In the final, Germany will defeat Yugoslavia or Croatia by three goals to one. Bet boldly. Eustacia, for life, though precious, is sorrowfully short."

Politically, 1998 will be as quiet as the last dodo cowering in a Mauritanian gorge in 1667, waiting for a Dutch sailor to club her. But the lull in geopolitical wrangling will only be that: an interlude lasting until 2004.

In 1998, there will be various elections: Cyprus, Costa Rica, Estonia. Places like that. But none of them will matter. Even the US mid-term congressional elections in November will leave no greater imprint on the face of the planet than the soft fall (in February) of crumbs from Chelsea Clinton's 18th birthday cake.

Peace will reign. There will be no large or middling wars. Even small conflicts will fizzle feebly. Between now and the revival of intercontinental hostilities in 2004, geo-political trivia Bill Clinton's alleged former sex life: Tony Blair's hair; Heilmann Kohl's retirement plans; Boris Yeltsin's funeral will be as much as folk will

wish to contemplate.

The most significant development in 1998 will be further moves in western Europe towards introduction of a single currency (for some nations) on January 1, 1999 a precursor (obviously) to a federated Europe, stretching to the Pacific, some time after 2021. In May, Europe's governments will announce which nations will be first-wave members of monetary union. In retrospect, what will be surprising will be how calmly and skillfully the paving stones to Euro-federalism will prove to have been laid.

I cannot demur from the conventional wisdom: 1998 will be a year of economic and investment prosperity. Not in Japan, of course. And not among the former, ill-named tigers of south-east Asia, which will continue to pay for their sins and hubris.

"In a manner difficult to quantify, still less describe," says Michael, "1998 will be profitable for most investors, though gains will not be dramatic. The Dow Jones will finish the year within 2.5 percent of its 1998 opening, as will the Footsie in London."

"There will be blips, dips and ego trips: there always are. But by December, economists will be categorising 1998 as the year when the Millennium Effect first played a detectable role in the world economy. The Millennium Effect an upswelling of awe at human accomplishments as we state gingerly towards the drawbridge to the 21st century will underpin markets until 2003, when skies will darken again. But

that is then, this is now. Right now, Eustacia, let us eat cake."

In July, the first, 20-tonne piece of the International Space Station—a habitation-cum-laboratory that will be far larger, eventually, than Mir—is due to be lobbed into Earth orbit. Given the inevitable cost over-runs, the likely total cost of the space station will hardly be far short of \$100 billion.

As usual, Earth-bound, gravity-tethered, know-nothing economists will fume at the cost and "pointlessness" of the most exciting and ambitious space project since Apollo. But far-seeing souls will know that the space station is another small step in mankind's colonization of space.

Michael puts it like this: "We are on our way to the planets of our own sun, and then to those of other stars in the Milky Way. We may be the first species to start colonizing space, even though mathematicians like you, Eustacia, say the chances of that being so are vanishingly small."

"Whether that is so or not, mankind's descendant species will multiply and prosper, filling numerous ecological niches in different planetary environments a long way from Earth so far from Earth, perhaps in other galaxies, that humankind will lose track of, and contact with, its space-children. The International Space Station is a small but sure step towards that adventure."

"Because of the space station, humanity will soon take a close interest in the truly large-scale mysteries of the universe, for example, the Great Attractor. As you know, Eustacia, all the galaxies in Earth's neighborhood are being pulled dragged at enormous speed in the direction of the constellation Centaurus."

"No one knows what is doing the pulling, or what we will find when we get there. The hypothetical Great Attractor is hidden from view behind the dark clouds of the Milky Way."

Investigation will be difficult. Nevertheless, the Great Attractor will inspire wonder and worship. A slothful, unmutating medium since its invention, television will spring into digital life in 1998, promising most viewers hundreds of extra channels. Britain is in the forefront of the revolution. Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB alone is planning to launch 200 or so digital satellite channels in the spring.

But the extra channels are less than half the digital TV story. More important, will the new bandwidth capacity will promote introduction of cheap, real-time, interactive services such as home shopping, banking, games and gambling."

Michael told me: "Interactivity will convert the screen in your sitting room into a magical looking glass, Eustacia. Take gambling. Almost nobody knows this, but early next century, cyber-gambling, via our TV screens, will become a planet-wide activity."

"Earlier, you and I discussed the soccer World Cup finals of 1998. But scroll forward to the World Cup of 2014, Eustacia. By then, the digital TV revolution will be complete. In 2014, every time a World Cup referee wants to red-card a player send him off the field his decision will have to be confirmed by a global plebiscite among 4bn-5bn viewers."

"Excitingly, many of those viewers will already be wagering on the game, in real time, via their screens. See what I mean about bread and circuses, Eustacia? In 1998, and for ever afterwards, there will be few bigger stories on Earth than bread and circuses."

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Taking stock of 1997

A year of dashed hopes and immense challenges

The Baqoura massacre, the Mashal incident, the crackdown on Jordan's press and the controversial elections top '97's crucial events

EDITOR'S NOTE: 1997 was somewhat a difficult year. The stalled peace process had its toll on the domestic scene in Jordan. In fact a lot of the political events and developments were seen as a direct response to Israeli intransigence on the peace process. The refusal by most people to accept the Israeli trade fair in Amman, the issue of a Jordanian soldier killing Israeli school girls in Baqura, and finally the attempt on the life of Hamas leader, Khalid Mashal in the heart of Amman by Israeli agents were seen as a part of a series of events connected with the general climate of frustration. The press didn't fair too well in 1997 with the government being accused of attempting to muzzle freedom of expression. All these issues and more are subject of *The Star's* review of the domestic scene in 1997.

January

■ Anti-normalization camp unite to protest a plan to hold an Israeli trade fair in Amman. All political parties, civic institutions and economic chambers reject the convening of the fair.

■ Controversial electoral draft law—one man one vote system—faces problems in 12th Parliament. Islamists believe that the law aims to reduce their power in Lower House.

■ After a tough year, Director General of the AFM, Wahib Al Shaer, expects growth in 1997.

■ Daily newspaper publishers defend decision to hike price of copy on newsstand. The price of a newspaper was increased from 150 fils to 200 fils.

■ Weeklies face legal action. The University of Jordan (UJ) filed a case against seven weekly newspapers claiming that they published inaccurate news about immoral practices in the Higher Studies Club of the UJ.

■ A Jordanian anti-normalizer arrested in Occupied Jerusalem by Israeli intelligence. Mr. Hatem Istanbuli of the Freedom Committee in the Engineers Association was picked up by Mossad agents while returning to Jordan after a visit to his relatives in the Occupied Territories.

■ Local banks raise their capital. Banks asked to increase capital to JD 20 million.

■ World Bank approves a study to finance a free zone in Aqaba.

■ Israeli fair opens in Amman amidst mass protest. More than 3000 people representing Jordanian political parties and civic institution gather in Marj Al Hamam where the fair takes place.

■ The four-day Israeli fair where 30 Israeli companies exhibit their industries fails to recruit local businessmen since the two strong chambers of commerce and trade boycotted the fair.

■ First Arab businessmen conference held in Amman. Stresses necessity of building a joint economic force.

■ UNRWA workers threaten to increase industrial action. Workers demand UNRWA to change policy on wages and salaries to meet high costs of living.

■ HM King Hussein succeeds in putting Palestinian-Israeli peace process on track after a tension as a result of the Israeli delay of withdrawing from Hebron. King meets Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Gaza and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Israeli troops withdraw from 80 percent of Hebron, leaving a strategic 20 under their control.

■ Jordanian ministerial economic delegation arrives in Baghdad to discuss the renewal of the Jordanian-Iraqi trade protocol. In Amman, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz meets with Prime Minister Abdel Karim Al Kabarti.

■ Mr. Ahmad Obeidat, former prime minister and ex-chief of the General Intelligence Department (GID) leads the anti-normalization campaign against the Israeli fair.

■ HRH Crown Prince Hassan opens the meetings of the Jordan Rift Valley Development Committee which start in Dead Sea.

■ Jordan-Iraq trade protocol renewed.

■ Minister of Culture, Dr. Ahmad Al Qudah bans public meetings. His decision widely criticized from intellectuals who are most affected.

■ Government wins debate on single vote system. Draft law was ratified by Lower House with a 51 majority votes out of 76 deputies attended the session.

■ Kuwaiti officers beat Jordanian prisoners. More than 100 officers from the Kuwaiti special force broke into the cells of Jordanians and Palestinian prisoners and attacked them. Prisoners were badly beaten and most transferred to hospitals.

■ King Hussein receives President Yasser Arafat—agrees to hold the joint Jordanian-Palestinian Higher Committee to reactivate agreements.

■ Draft law on alcohol creates much controversy in Lower House.

■ HM King Hussein leaves hospital sound and well after having a successful minor surgery on his knee.

February

■ Jordan Press Association and government move to restrain weeklies and prevent changes in press law. Weekly press criticized by Lower House after a weekly newspaper published a sensational story with pictures dealing with intimate marital issues.

■ Aqaba port witnesses rise in activity as Jordanian shipping agencies compete to sign contracts to import cargo for Iraq via the port.

■ Jordan-Israeli gas projects flop.

■ Division in Islamic movement resurfaces as a moderate Islamists (Abdallah Al Akaileh and Bassam Al Umoush) supports participation in government, despite a previous decision banning participation as long as government adheres to peace treaty with Israel.

■ Prominent lawyer Ibrahim Baker dies at 73, after four-year battle with cancer. Considered as a figurehead in the Palestinian national movement.

■ Amman Financial Market recorded its best results since 1995.

March

■ Israeli rightwing premier flies to Jordan for talks with King Hussein. Netanyahu's visit comes after his cabinet's decision to build settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim in Jerusalem.

■ Human rights activists call on government to close bread riots chapter. According to the Arab Organization for Human Rights, the country witnessed grave violations against human rights in 1996.

■ Anti-Corruption squad uncovered a number of corruption cases at Zerga Free Zone. Embezzlement from 750,000 to JD 3 million.

■ Confrontation between government and the Jordanian Engineers Association over the former's rejection for a salary increase demanded by public sector engineers.

■ Jordanian properties in Israel turn into a legal battle. Jordanians of Palestinian origin file cases to retrieve properties they left behind after the 1948 war.

■ Conditions in the Al Hussein Social Institution, home to 173 orphans is brought under spotlight after a surprise visit by Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor. The King offered his own palace as the new building for the orphans. King criticizes government for lack of care towards social welfare institutions.

■ Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Khalid Madadha resigns post in Al Kabarti government.

■ King Hussein receives Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. Visit discusses Israeli decision to build settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim.

■ King sends letter to Israeli premier accusing him of pushing Arabs and Israelis towards bloodshed and disaster. The King's letter was drafted when Netanyahu refused the King's request to fly the Palestinian leader to Gaza from Amman by a Royal-Trust jet.

■ Jordanians protest Israeli plans to build settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim.

■ Jordanian soldier Ahmad Al Dakamseh, 26, opens fire on Israeli schoolgirls touring Baqoura, a border outpost. Dakamseh claim girls made fun of him while praying. Put under arrest. Popular groups call for a just trial for Dakamseh.

■ King Hussein flies to Israel for a series of emotional visits with the families of seven schoolgirls killed by the Jordanian soldier.

■ King Hussein accepts resignation of Prime Minister Abdel Karim Al Kabarti after 13 months in office. In a strongly worded letter the King openly criticizes Kabarti for not acting swiftly to deal with the deterioration conditions in the social welfare centers.

■ King assigns Dr. Abdel Salam Al Majali to form a 23-minister Cabinet. The government's main duty is to supervise the parliamentary elections in November.

■ About 100 public figures establish a committee on behalf of Dakamseh.

■ HRH Crown Prince Hassan meets President Arafat in Gaza. His visit aims to resolve crisis in Palestinian-Israeli relations.

■ Opposition opens fire on Al Majali's government, accuses it of one color and of wanting to marginalize opposition in coming elections.

■ Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz visits Jordan and hold talks with Dr. Majali. Aziz's visit seen as a start of a new era of co-operation.

■ AFM concludes March dealings with a sharp decline.

April

■ King Hussein and US President Bill Clinton meet in Washington to pressure resumption of talks between Palestinians and Israelis. King asks for stronger US action towards peace.

■ Sympathy continues for Al Dakamseh by many Jordanians and Arabs.

■ More than 2000 people took part in a solidarity festival with the city of Jerusalem in Karamah in the Jordan Valley.

■ Nine 11-grade schoolboys, about 16 and 17 years of age, were arrested



Sheikh Yassin during a press conference in Amman

by police for allegedly planning to attack Israeli embassy in Amman, and on suspicions of forming an illegal organization and distributing pamphlets against the Israeli embassy. The boys burnt tyres close to the location of the Israeli embassy. All of them were released on JD 5000 bail.

■ King Hussein undergoes a successful prostate surgery at Mayo Clinic in the USA.

■ Aadeb Abbassi, a Jordanian patriot stages a hunger strike till death. He is protesting the Israeli building of settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim.

■ Arab businessmen gather in Amman to set up a \$100 million company to help create the basis for a viable Palestinian economy in the heart of Jerusalem.

■ World Bank social security package which includes JD 173 million for Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan sparks fears of schemes to settle refugees in the host countries.

■ Women's quota creates heated dialogue as parliamentary elections approach. Women activists from different political and social colors start debate.

■ Ministry of Supply decides to float vegetable prices despite criticism.

■ Registered companies in industrial sector record sharp hike. About 369 companies are registered at a capital of JD 12 million; JD 263,000 is foreign capital.

May

■ King Hussein and Israeli prime minister Netanyahu agree to work together to defuse crisis over water sharing.

■ Several Jordanian economic experts are careful to applaud Jordanian-EU association accord.

■ Hamas political leader Musa Abu Marzouk arrives in Amman. He was deported to Jordan after being held in New York City Jail since July 1995.

■ National Constitutional Party (NCP) licensed. The center-right party is a merger of nine small centrist and establishment parties.

■ Government decides to establish a free zone in Aqaba.

■ Jordanian ultra-nationalists and Jordanians of Palestinian origin exchange fire, renew debate over national identity and political rights of Jordanians of Palestinian origin. King intervenes and closes debate.

■ Aadeb Abbassi, 92, dies after a three week hunger strike. Despite his courageous stand hardly anybody took notice of his death.

■ King strongly criticizes sensational and irresponsible press.

■ Government imposes harsh amendments to the 1993 Press and Publication Law. The amendments spark widespread reactions from political parties and civic institutions. The new temporary press law gives government greater control over newspapers and the other 542 periodical publications in the country.

■ About 60 journalists hold a peaceful sit-in in front of the Prime Ministry; this ends in violence as riot police use force to disperse journalists. At least four injured and 10 arrested. They were later released.

■ Military prosecutor charges soldier Ahmad Al Dakamseh with premeditated murder.

■ About 60 schoolgirls were taken to Al Mafraq Hospital suffering from food poisoning as a result of eating canned cheese that has been donated by a European country. Another 70 schoolboys in Al Wadai, Amman, were also taken to hospital suffering from food poisoning as a result of eating sandwiches from the school's cafeteria.

■ Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal Bin Abdel Aziz, Chairman of the Saudi Arabia Holding company becomes the only Arab shareholder of the Jordan Magnesia Company.

■ Government and the Jordan Press Association hold talks to discuss repercussions of the new press law, both failed to find an exit.

June

■ Trial of Dakamseh starts; pleads not guilty.

■ King Hussein receives Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to discuss ways to kick-start peace process.

■ Mood of tension in the country. Civic bodies unite to challenge the government over the amendments to the Press and Publication Law.

■ King Hussein receives Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal.

■ Their Majesties King Hussein and

Queen Noor start European tour: Netherlands, France, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

■ United Nations University's International Leadership Academy (UNU/ILA) convenes in Amman.

■ King Hussein receives newly elected General Secretary of the Israeli Labor Party Ehud Barak. At same day King also receives Palestinian President Yasser Arafat; begins two-day visit to Kingdom.

■ Prince Hassan holds successful talks with US President Clinton in Washington. Highlight of visit was the US announcement of a \$100 million aid package to Jordan through the creation of a Middle East Peace and Stability Fund.

■ The editorial team of the *Abd Rahbo* (Slave of His God), the satirical weekly magazine decide to close down the paper as a result of the new amended press law which adds heavy financial penalties.

■ Police arrest a Syrian who admits killing a family of three, including a child who is also a Syrian.

■ Jordanians protest the US congress decision to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Occupied Jerusalem.

■ King Hussein receives Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

■ Popular Conference for the Defence of Jerusalem was held in Amman under the title "Jerusalem 6000 years on, is ours."

■ The conference was attended by about 1800 personalities from around the world.

■ A report was released by the Ministry of Health unveiled that the number of AIDS carriers in Jordan is 126. Five of them already died. Number of people who died from AIDS since 1986 is 42.

■ Anti-drugs squad seizes more than 22 kilograms of heroin at a street value of JD 1 million.

■ Jordan rejects Israeli reports claiming Jordan and Israel relocated a projected dam site on the Yarmouk river to Syrian occupied territory.

September

■ UNRWA revokes decision to impose charges on services after protests held by Palestinian refugees in camps.

■ President of Czech Republic Vaclav Havel and his spouse make a three-day visit to the country.

■ King Hussein, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat meet in Cairo and discuss obstacles facing peace process.

■ US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visits Jordan within a week-long tour of the Middle East. Albright's first visit to the region was of "a poor harvest" regarding the peace process.

■ King Hussein receives Algerian President Lamine Zeroual.

■ Government suspends eight weekly newspapers for failing to comply with the new press law.

■ Two Israeli embassy guards were shot and injured in an Amman residential area. Attackers not identified.

■ Israeli Mossad agents attempt to assassinate Hamas politburo chief Khalid Mashal in Amman. Mashal was saved by his bodyguard who also arrested the two attackers and handed them to the local police. Mashal was hit with an unidentified tool on his right ear; he was carried to King Hussein Medical City in a critical condition. His health returned to normal after few days. The crime weapon and the substance involved remain unknown.

■ After King's intervention, Israel releases Hamas' spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin. Yassin was sent to King Hussein Medical City to undergo medical treatment.

■ Government suspends another five weekly newspapers for failing to comply with new press law; number of suspended papers reaches 13.

October

■ Mashal completely recovers and leaves



Lower House deputies Sheikh Ra'fat and Hamadeh Faraneh meet Knesset speaker Speaker

hospital.

■ The two captured Mossad agents are sent home. Israel agrees to allow Sheikh Yassin go home to Gaza from Amman. A number of Jordanian and Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails are released.

■ Election campaign for the 4th November parliamentary starts.

■ About 560, including 17 women candidates register for the 80-seat Lower House. Six political parties decide to run elections, while 10 opposition parties led by Islamists boycott. But two Islamist figures, Abdallah Al Akaileh and Mohammad Azyadeh, break the Muslim Brotherhood boycott decision and contest the race.

■ Public schools start teaching Christianity. Teaching is to take place every Thursday when schools are off.

■ King Hussein receives Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh in Amman.

■ Jordanian private sector calls to boycott Israeli delegation in Doha.

■ An international seminar on press freedoms held in Amman lashes at new press law, asks government to repeal it.

■ International Air Transport Association (IATA) holds its 53rd general meeting in Amman.

November

■ Elections is over. Low turn-out by voters in urban areas, independents, tribal heads make up two-thirds of Lower House. None of the female candidates is elected.

■ Opposition parties criticize the outcome of the elections, saying the new House is service oriented and pro-government. Observers say new legislators have to prove that they are more than service MPs.

■ King Hussein is given a clean bill of health at the Mayo Clinic where he undergoes routine medical check-ups.

■ Prince Hassan meets with Israeli Minister of Infrastructure, Ariel Sharon at the Royal Court.

■ King meets Netanyahu in London. The first meeting since Israeli agents tried to kill Hamas leader in Amman in September.

■ Press and Publication Dept. revokes license of 14 weekly newspapers. The 14 weeklies were suspended two months earlier. The PPD claims that these weeklies failed to meet requirements demanded by new law. Eight weekly papers contest the ruling at the High Court.

■ Jordan signs the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement in Brussels.

■ Islamic movement faces internal crisis regarding the boycott decision.

December

■ King opens first session of Parliament, stresses that his government will present important draft laws to the House.

■ Government ready to send draft laws restricting Professional Associations and Political parties. The concerned parties protest government attempts and promise to fight it. Government submits to the Lower House the draft law of the amended Press and Publication Law of 1993, deputies promise to reject articles restricting freedoms.

■ Majali flies to Ramallah and meets with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in an attempt to iron out tension between both sides, after Israeli media claims that Jordan finds the Palestinian state as a threat to its security.

■ An agreement is concluded between Jordan and Israel during Doha MENA conference to designate Irbid as an industrial zone. However, the Jordanian-Israeli planned industrial estate faces harsh criticism.

■ Mazen Al Masri, the man who was accused of poisoning his two young children with cyanide tablets, is sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor.

■ King sends a letter to Prime Minister Abdel Salam Al Majali renewing his trust in his government and underlining Jordan's position on the Palestinian issue.

■ King Hussein receives Saudi Prince Walid Bin Talal Bin Abdel Aziz and his son Prince Khalid Bin Walid in Amman.

■ Iraq executes four Jordanians on charges of smuggling auto spareparts. The government acts swiftly. First it recalls Jordan's Charge d'affaires in Baghdad, Adel Sweidan, and later on it expels seven Iraqi diplomats from the Kingdom.

■ Annual budget for '98 is presented to Parliament and is estimated at JD 1987 million. GDP expected to maintain 6% growth.

■ The Majali government wins 51 votes out of 79 deputies who attended the confidence session.

■ The first batch of the F-16s fighters arrives at Muwafaq Salti air base. Four of the 16 US-made fighters were delivered to the Royal Air Force from the United States.

■ Popular sentiments high over visit by two deputies Sheikh Mohammad Ra'fat and Hamadeh Faraneh to Knesset. Demonstration in Baqa'a refugee camps demand resignation of two deputies. Popular groups gather 20,000 signatures to force the two deputies to quit their seats in the Lower House.



Tonjan and other 16 female candidates fails to win



Our Say...

Understanding the lessons of 1997

AS WE bid 1997 good-bye, we look back to see how that year changed and affected our lives. For Jordanians, 1997 was the year when the promise of a genuine peace with Israel was finally tumbled. No longer a warm peace, Jordanians will remember the past year as a tumultuous one in Jordanian-Israeli relations: the year when angry public sentiments reached their highest levels, especially after Mossad agents were caught red-handed in Amman few minutes after they made a cowardly attempt on the life of Hamas leader Khaled Mashal.

The derailing of the peace process by Israel's extremist government, cast its shadow on Jordan's political and economic reforms and expectations. The hopes attached to the government of Abdel Karim Kabariti and its "white revolution" were dashed. The government was sacked unexpectedly and its successor, led by Dr Abdel Salam Majali, soon embarked on a controversial mission that reversed some of the most important democratic gains in the last seven years. Paramount among them is the press law, which the government revoked and replaced with a temporary legislation that led to the forced suspension, and later closure, of 13 Jordanian weeklies. The honeymoon for Jordan's press was over.

The amendment of the press law also signaled changes in laws regulating political parties, professional unions and legislative elections.

These and other regressions prompted the bulk of the opposition parties in the Kingdom, led by the Muslim Brotherhood and IAF, to boycott the November parliamentary elections. The historic walkout has dealt a terrible blow to the country's budding democracy exemplified in a low voter turnout, an increase in the influence of tribes and their representatives and a generally depoliticized Lower House.

On the economic and social levels, the majority of Jordanians continued to suffer from high unemployment, rise in the cost of living, slow economic recovery and imbalance in the distribution of services, among others. Still, economic indicators were encouraging, although their effect was not felt at the level of most Jordanians.

Relations with the Gulf countries improved during 1997, especially with Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Jordan and Iran took some important steps forward towards normalizing relations, while a crisis in Jordanian-Iraqi relations over Baghdad's execution of four Jordanian nationals on petty crimes, was finally overcome.

The renewal of the oil agreement between Iraq and Jordan for 1998 was an important feat indeed. Under that agreement Jordan secured supply of all its oil needs for 1998 at preferential prices.

Likewise, differences between Jordan and the Palestinian leadership were ironed-out through diligent work on both sides. Hope of better working relationship at various levels in 1998 are backed by a new set of agreements that both sides have signed last week.

We have high hopes for the new year. But hopes alone will not make the important transformation that we all want to see in our lives. It is important to take stock of the events that took place in 1997 and draw the right lessons. ■

Letters to the Editor

Crime against Iraqi children

To The Editor,

Baghdad—This time of year, people of different faith traditions recognize the value and dignity of children by honoring them with gifts and lifting them up as a sign of hope for the future.

We come to this hospital on Christmas eve to bring gifts of medicine and toys to Iraqi children. We...publicly challenge the morality of the economic sanctions against the people of Iraq. We are the ninth delegation to come to Iraq in the past two years, and we will continue to bring desperately needed medicine to Iraq and to work for an end to the sanctions.

During our visit here in Iraq, we have gone to hospitals and seen children suffering from various forms of malnutrition. Prior to the sanctions, death from starvation was unknown in this country. Today on Christmas, nearly one million children are at risk of dying from chronic malnutrition. We have seen children struggling to breathe—their lungs congested by pneumonia and no antibiotics to treat them. We have seen parents who wait without hope

with their children, who are dying from treatable forms of leukemia because they cannot purchase the medicine they need. We have heard of parents selling their personal belongings and even their homes to buy medicine for their children. We have talked to representatives of UN agencies and relief organizations and visited Iraqis in their homes. The message is constant and clear: the sanctions have led to more and more hunger and disease, shattering the lives of Iraqi families. UN Resolution 986, "Oil for Food," has not even begun to ease their suffering.

Today, we are delivering antibiotics, aspirin, and vitamins to help save the lives of few Iraqi children. According to the US government, this is a criminal act. At the same time, the sanctions have taken the lives of 600,000 Iraqi children under the age of five. Is this not a crime?

Yours Sincerely,

"Voices in the Wilderness",
American Christians

The Star

Jordan's political, economic
and cultural weekly

An independent political, economic and cultural weekly, published every Thursday in Amman by Media Services International (Info-Media).
Editorial & Advertising: Telephones 652-380, 645-380, Fax 648-298,
P.O. Box 9313, Postal Code 11191 Amman - Jordan. email: Star@arabia.com
URL: http://www.arabia.com/star

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Member of The International Advertising Association

Subscriptions: (annual) Jordan JD 20, Arab countries US\$ 100, W. Europe US\$ 200, USA & Canada US\$ 200.

Letters to the editor: Will be edited for brevity, must contain name and address of sender.

Notes from the Levant

Our new year resolution on Iraq: Break the sanctions now!

By Osama El-Sherif

IF SHE survives her ordeal, young Amal Taher will grow up believing in Santa Claus. The five-year-old Iraqi girl was flown out of Baghdad this week on board a plane hired by an Icelandic charity group that landed in the Iraqi capital few days earlier bringing gifts and medicine to the people of Iraq. The world will forever remember the image of the sickly girl, suffering from a rare genetic disease, as she sat in Baghdad airport next to an almost real Santa Claus waiting to board the plane that took her to Europe where she will receive proper medical care.

Not all Iraqi children are as lucky. The same week, Iraq announced that it will be cutting down milk and food rations because of incessant delays in deliveries caused by the UN inspection bodies. The decision, whether for real or not, focuses attention once more on the plight of the Iraqi people as a result of the UN sanctions regime. Imposed since 1990. That same week, a Russian mercy plane was also allowed to land in Baghdad. Both flights, requiring special permits from the cumbersome bureaucracy of the United Nations, were exceptional and symbolic. Only UN weapon inspectors enjoy the luxury of air travel to and from Iraq.

Amal is not the only victim of the comprehensive blockade of Iraq. Hundreds of Iraqi children die every month as a result of malnutrition, inadequate medical facilities and shortage of medicines. These are not Iraqi allegations, but facts drawn from field studies and published by international organizations, including the UN.

The world disagrees with Saddam Hussein and the United States, among others, would like to see him dead or removed from power. But the world cannot stand idle while thousands of Iraqis perish as a result of the UN sanctions. Between the political objectives of the Security Council and the humanitarian realities in Iraq, the world must draw a line and take a stand. If morality and human values have a place in the New World Order, then the Iraqi case provides the ultimate test.

The Arab world must also make that choice. In fact, it has a special obligation to lead; it cannot afford to observe or ignore. Mercy flights have come from Iceland and Russia—two countries separated by thousands of miles from Iraq. Can any of the Arab countries dare to defy the strict sanctions and fly mercy planes to besieged Baghdad?

Neither the Muslim world, meeting Tehran, or the GCC, in their Kuwait summit, was able to make that clear-cut choice. If the Arabs and Muslims can't make up their mind over Iraq, can we expect the rest of the world to be more sympathetic?

The sanctions have raised important moral and political questions. In the first place, they were imposed to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and submit to a grinding disarmament program. Iraq has done both. But after almost seven years, it is clear that they are now designed to humiliate and weaken the Iraqi leadership and encourage a massive rebellion or a palace coup. Both have failed to happen and the Iraqi leader is still defiant and in control.

But most importantly, Iraq today is not the same country that marched into Kuwait in the summer of 1990. Most of its weapons of mass destruction have been dismantled, while the country's economic infrastructure was either destroyed or remains crippled. If anything, Iraq itself could fall prey to the dangers of outside infiltration or partition.

Thus comes the humanitarian aspect of the drama. No one really knows how many people have died or are dying as a result of the sanctions. But it is estimated that no less than 5 percent of Iraqis may have been killed as a result of the sanctions. One million Iraqi children are at risk of dying if the sanctions continue.

The country's economy is in shambles, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have fled and are exiles in far-away continents. The central government is unable to provide basic needs to a suffering nation of 18 million people. In fact, if the sanctions are to be removed tomorrow, Iraq will be in desperate need of a major international rescue mission to rebuild itself. It is definitely more

eligible than South Korea or Indonesia.

Some Americans and Europeans have described what is going on in Iraq as the closest thing to genocide. Yet the Arabs are silent, except for individual and modest initiatives carried out by intellectuals and concerned citizens every now and then.

It is not enough to pay lip service and blame the Americans, regional instability and individual positions. The time has come for the Arabs to emerge from their self-imposed seclusion, indifference and apathy after the fact, to take a stand on Iraq. They should lead and force a change. As they observe the holy month of Ramadan, the Arabs should dispatch daily flights to Baghdad carrying food and medicine to Iraq's suffering children. That should be the first step towards removing the sanctions and that should be our new year resolution! ■



Amal Al Taher sits besides Santa in Baghdad before departing for Amsterdam to be treated for a rare genetic disease, Sunday.

'Apocalypse Now'

By Edward Said

changed and has become his non-compliance, and the terrible effects of the sanctions have been marginalized. Still the underlying causes of an Arab/US crisis remain.

A careful analysis of that crisis is imperative. The US has always opposed any sign of Arab nationalism or independence, partly for its own imperial reasons and partly because its un-

people with traditions, cultures and identities of their own is simply inadmissible in the US. Arabs are dehumanized, they are seen as violent irrational terrorists always on the lookout for murder and bombing outrages. The only Arabs worth doing business with for the US are compliant leaders, businessmen, military people whose arms purchases (the highest per capita in

the woefully misguided Doha economic summit) despite its hostility to the collective Arab agenda.

In the case of Iraq a number of further extenuations make the US even more repressive. Burning in the collective American unconscious is a puritanical zeal decreeing the sternest possible attitude towards anyone deemed to be an unregenerate sinner.

This clearly guided American policy towards the native American Indians, who were first demonized, then portrayed as wasteful savages, then exterminated, their tiny remnant confined to reservations and concentration camps. This almost religious anger fuels a judgemental attitude that has no place at all in international politics, but for the United States it is a central tenet of its worldwide behavior. Second, punishment is conceived in apocalyptic terms. During the Vietnam war a leading general advocated—and almost achieved—the goal of bombing the enemy into the stone age. The same view prevailed during the Gulf War in 1991. Sinners are meant to be condemned terminally, with the utmost cruelty regardless of whether or not they suffer the cruellest agonies. The notion of "justified" punishment for Iraq is now uppermost in the minds of most American consumers of news, and with that goes an almost orgasmic delight in the gathering power being summoned to confront Iraq in the Gulf.

Pictures of four (or is now five?) immense aircraft carriers steaming virtuously away punctuate breathless news bulletins about Saddam's defiance, and the impending crisis. The President announces that he is thinking not about the Gulf but about the 21st century: how can we tolerate Iraq's threat to use biological warfare even though (this is unmentioned) it is clear from the UNSCOM reports that he neither has the missile capacity, nor the chemical arms, nor the nuclear arsenal, nor in fact the anthrax bombs that he is alleged to be brandishing? Forgotten in all this is that the US has all the terror weapons known to humankind, is the only country to have used a nuclear bomb on civilians, and as recently as seven years ago dropped 66,000 tons of bombs on Iraq. As the

Unfortunately the dictates of raw power are very severe and, for a weak state like Iraq, overwhelming. Certainly US misuse of the sanctions to strip Iraq of everything, including any possibility for security is monstrously sadistic.

conditional support for Israel requires it to do so. Since the 1973 war, and despite the brief oil embargo, Arab policy up to and including the peace process has tried to circumvent or mitigate that hostility by appealing to the US for help, by "good" behavior, by willingness to make peace with Israel. Yet mere compliance with the US's wishes can produce nothing except occasional words of American approval for leaders who appear "moderate." Arab policy was never backed up with coordination, or collective pressure, or fully agreed upon goals. Instead each leader tried to make separate arrangements both with the US and with Israel, none of which produced very much except escalating demands and a constant refusal by the US to exert any meaningful pressure on Israel. The more extreme Israeli policy becomes the more likely the US has been to support it. And the less respect it has for the large mass of Arab peoples whose future and well-being are mortgaged to illusory hopes embodied, for instance, in the Oslo accords.

Moreover, a deep gulf separates Arab culture and civilization on the one hand, from the United States on the other, and in the absence of any collective Arab information and cultural policy, the notion of an Arab

the world) are helping the positive about the Arabs is seen in the US as a threat to Israel. In this respect pro-Israeli American Jews, traditional Orientalists, and military hawks have played a devastating role. Moral opprobrium is heaped on Arab states as it is on no others. Turkey, for example, has been conducting a campaign against the Kurds for several years, yet nothing is heard about this in the US. Israel occupies territory illegally for 30 years, it violates the Geneva conventions at will, conducts invasions, terrorist attacks and assassinations against Arabs, and still, the US vetoes every sanction against it in the UN. Syria, Sudan, Libya, Iraq are classified as "rogue" states. Sanctions against them are far harsher than against any other countries in the history of US foreign policy. And still the US expects that its own foreign policy agenda ought to prevail (eg,

Many an East...
Khair...

Happy New Year!

PARIS—"Baah, Humbug," were the words that immortalized the fictitious character of scrooge, in Charles Dickens' Christmas Carols. Though well to do in financial affairs, this character was maligned in social matters, and societal relations. To him, the cup of life was always half empty, and nothing existed outside his own mind.

We in Jordan, continue to have our own share of the "scrooge brigade," for whom the cup of life remains half empty, and no single achievement will even convince them of the great strides we have taken to guarantee ourselves a better future. They still claim that we don't have a place among nations, and that we are condemned to poverty thereafter. They want us to feel insecure in our identity and confused in our being, as to them, cynicism is the only answer to our alleged inability to deal with life on its own terms. At this point it is legitimate to wonder who are these people among us, and is their judgment clouded by their bad socio-economic circumstances, or abject poverty?

The answer is a "no," for one is not discussing the psychology of the pockets of poverty in our country, but rather of prosperous merchants, ostentatious industrialists, and business people who are the ones that have done best in the one and some atmosphere that they keep criticizing and are the ones that are throwing doubts about, that is when they are not involved in mud slinging matches. If it was the poor who were most vocal in their complaints, well, one would have rationalized the matter and had more patience, and understanding. But for the abundantly rich and prosperous to keep complaining about our country and its supposed lack of future is not acceptable anymore.

Having put up with their mendacity in the name of encouraging private initiative does not mean that we want the creation of a scrooge brigade, but rather captains of industry and commerce from Jordan, as well as for Jordan. It's a very strange phenomenon that it is the most gains from our way of life who are the most bitter and acrimonious.

As one Jordanian, as for as one can remember, our country has never been known for extolling the virtues of poverty, but rather, the virtues of hard work, independent enterprise, and the right for the pursuit of happiness. Therefore, none of our general beliefs are in contradiction with the ethos of private enterprise, so either that there is a serious scrooge phenomenon growing in our midst, or merely that it has become fashionable in certain circles to criticize Jordan publicly, and in front of international audiences, captive or otherwise.

So that they can be considered as forward thinking, first and foremost, without false modesty, we in Jordan are up to the intellectual challenges that confront us irrespective of any quarter, and that is seconded by all intellectuals and thinkers that visit us frequently. So, if there are a few people who happened to read a couple of books about us, it does not mean that we have to agree with them automatically, just for seeking their acceptance. We do not wish to be told how to be and how to feel by a resonant chorus of the scrooge brigade.

To be objective is undoubtedly important, and intellectual detachment does not mean cynicism and delinquency in judgment. If we do not roll back this phenomenon of scrooge brigades in our society, then they are most likely to become the only norm for our people. We have always been against obscurantists, now they have emerged under a new guise. In any case, this is a thought for the new year, so Happy New Year for one and all. ■

Continued on page 6

Business scene

■ Total sales of Royal Jordanian till the end of last October reached \$322.2 million, a rise of 4 percent compared with the same period last year.

RJ is planning to operate new routes to Canada and Singapore besides increasing its flights to Kuwait and Tunisia during next summer. Also, a new route is under study to organize regular flights to Tehran and encourage movement of businessmen between Jordan and Iran. By this year, total passengers carried by RJ planes reached 1,380,000. Also the airline carried so far about 71,000 tons of goods.

■ Total assets at the Central Bank of Jordan till the end of last November reached JD 3.7 billion. About JD 3.6 billion are convertible foreign assets, including gold which stands at JD 142.2 million. Total current accounts and deposit deposits reached JD 2.1 billion, besides deposits in convertible currency at JD 452.6 million.

■ Expo Jordan, which was the sponsor of the first show of Jordanian companies given the ISO 9000 certificate for standard and high quality, is currently preparing for a show of Jordanian and Arab companies given the ISO 9000 certificates. Meanwhile, 25 Jordanian companies in the industrial and services sectors have arranged bookings for their booths in the exhibit. However, it is expected that nearly 70 Jordanian concerns will take part in the expected show. Expo Jordan plans to start its marketing campaign for the event through contacts with Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia and Palestine. So far, 4 Syrian companies showed willingness to participate, in addition to Lebanese and Egyptian firms.

■ The UN Sanctions Committee has approved new contracts for Jordanian companies in the light of the third phase of the oil-for-food deal concluded between the UN and Iraq in late 1996. According to official sources these contracts are worth \$10,924,460.

Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 31 December

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7880	0.7180
£	1.1510	1.1508
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SFR	0.4801	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
LIT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

Petroleum protocol eases tension between Jordan and Iraq

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

THE SIGNING of the petroleum protocol between Jordan and Iraq for 1998, Monday, ended speculations and rumors on the possibility of an impending economic crisis between the two countries. Jordanian-Iraqi diplomatic relations have chilled after the executions of five Jordanian nationals in Iraq reportedly alleged for smuggling spareparts. Though the official and popular response to the Iraqi action was tough, the two sides were keen not to escalate the tension and did succeed by finally renewing the annual petroleum protocol. Iraqi officials have formerly given assurances that their diplomatic dispute with Jordan won't affect their bilateral economic ties especially in oil and gas supplies. Jordan is used to buy oil and its by-products from Iraq at preferential prices. This is besides the free of charge oil valued at \$250 million exported to Jordan annually.

During 1997, Jordan received about 4.5 million tons of Iraqi crude oil and by-products, a rise of 7 percent compared with last year, according to Mohammad Saleh Al Hourani, minister of energy and mineral resources. Such a rise also applies to the

1998 petroleum protocol to meet Jordan's local needs.

Iraqi Oil Minister Amer Mohammad Rasheed, who signed the protocol for the Iraqi side, stressed that his country's stance to Jordan is clear and it will continue supplying her with oil and by-products. Upon the renewed protocol, Jordan will get 4.8 million tons at a special discount at \$2.3 per barrel.

However, Mr. Hourani added that the ceiling of the barrel price is sold to Jordan at \$16.8 compared with \$19.1, but if the price rises on spot markets, then the two sides will agree on a new ceiling.

"But Jordan will definitely get a discount of 50 percent, under any conditions," Hourani stated.

The petroleum protocol is not restricted to Iraqi oil exports to Jordan. There are areas for further cooperation between the two countries in the fields of oil drilling and excavations besides exchanging expertise, building an oil refinery in Aqaba port, and development of the Al Reesha Jordanian oil field.

In line with the protocol, a joint company is to be established for offering petroleum services "Pera" to be in charge of carrying the Iraqi crude to Jordan through trucks.



Turning on the Iraqi oil tap!

Last year, more than 3000 trucks were used to carry the Iraqi oil at total costs of \$50 million.

But the plan to install a pipeline from Iraq to Jordan for such a purpose could help a great deal in reducing

these costs. This pipeline is estimated to cost \$500 million.

Now that the petroleum pact has been approved, a Jordanian delegation is expected to leave to Iraq soon to negotiate with Iraqi offi-

cial on renewal of the trade protocol between the two countries. In compliance with the protocol, Iraq imports Jordanian goods at \$225 million every year.

But some sources point out that this volume might be raised in the 1998 protocol, attributing their expectations to Jordan's willingness to increase its exports to Iraq for it sees Iraq as a strategic commercial partner.

Official statistics pointed out that Jordanian exports to Iraq since the beginning of 1997 and till last September hit the JD 115 million mark, generating a rise of 19.6 percent compared with the same period in 1996.

However, its imports from Iraq till last September reached JD 291 million against JD 358.5 million during 1996.

Industrial Estates

A safe bet for prosperity

AMMAN (Star)—The spine of an economy is its industrial base. In this respect, prosperity is measured by the number of factories that are able to produce and compete internationally. The government in Jordan recognizes this and is seeking to attract investments. This country has two major industrial bases—the Amman Industrial Estate and Al-Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid. These are in turn organized through the Industrial Estates Corp. (IEC), which has recently introduced measures to boost industry and provide local manufacturers with further incentives.

At one stroke, the IEC from the rest of lands and properties at the two cities for 1998. Now industrialists can look forward to stable prices, as their rent is usually increased by five percent at a time.

Investment in the both Amman and Irbid Estates proved buoyant for 1997. More than JD 740.1 million were invested. What is more interesting is that JD 298.8 of the total capital was from Arab and foreign investors. Further outside capital mainly concentrated in foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, engineering and plastic industries.

In the Amman Industrial Estate at Sehab, the investment volume stands at JD 607 million, while there are 349 factories that employ nearly 13,000 workers.

Hoping to attract more investments and bridge cooperation among industrial sectors and institutions, the IEC has opened an office to provide services to investors. This is to simplify the investment procedure cut down on red-tape.

The Corporation's Director-General, Mr. Amer Al Majali said that seminars and workshops have been organized to provide investors with information that could

be of much benefit to investors who want to start up a business in the two cities.

Moreover, they will be of great help to develop their industries, and enhance their productive and marketing potential in the light of the economic openness. It would also help meet the requirements of the new challenges after the signing of the EU association agreement and prepare Jordan for membership into the World Trade Organization.

In this respect, the IEC could help guide industrialists on the best way for their investments, and they in turn could select projects which would lead to much sustainable development.

The IEC is planning on further expansion for 1999. Five new industrial areas are to be established in Karak, Mafrak, Al Muwaker, Aqaba and Zerqa.

The tender for the expansion project of the Al Hassan Industrial Estate (first phase) which costs about JD 1.6 million is expected to be offered soon. The total costs of the project (two phases) are estimated at JD 3.2 million.

Referring to the infrastructure and other services concerning the Karak industrial estate, Al Majali said the operations which will start shortly are expected to be completed by mid-1999. Total costs of the project stand at JD 7 million.

Some manufacturers have recently been complaining about problems such as the shortage of water needed for plants besides the weak electric power, lack of telephones and communications facilities and the difference in tariffs.

Speaking about such problems, Al Majali stated that most of them have been resolved, whilst contacts are still going with concerned parties to solve others, in particular electricity and tele-

phones. The Jordan Telecommunications Company has promised to install about 500 lines for the Amman Industrial Estate.

A latest information indicate that so many factories have closed, but Al Majali attrib-

uted this to the fact that some of these plants mainly focused on the Iraqi market.

But, he added that they are few and their closure did not affect the size of overall investment in the industrial areas.

World will feel effects of economic reforms by Japan and South Korea

By J. James Flanagan

THE ECONOMIES of South Korea and Japan entered another stage in their transition to open markets last week, promising reforms that will have profound effects on the world economy in the next two to three years.

As a result of changes now underway, both countries will open their economies to foreign investment in trade and commerce far more than they have to date.

They will reshape their companies and industries, providing opportunities for US and European companies and investors. In turn, Korean and Japanese companies will expand abroad, adding to their presence in the United States.

Ultimately, as reforms renew the vigor of these two major economies—South Korea is the 11th largest in the world, Japan's is the second largest—they will provide the locomotive force to help the development of the giant economies of China, India and Indonesia.

Meanwhile, all those economies, along with Korea and Japan, remain in difficulty, although the atmosphere of crisis eased last week.

In Korea, timely international financing efforts by the US Treasury, the World Bank and leading industrial nations and commercial banks reduced the

threat of default by Korean banks and companies.

The widespread fear among government officials and financial experts was that defaults in Korea would cause a chain reaction with unnecessary disruptions and layoffs in industry in Europe, Japan and the United States.

In Japan, the government indicated forcefully that it will protect depositors from losses in bank failures. Its actions are reminiscent of the US government setting up the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. more than 60 years ago.

The Japanese government is also acting to increase capital reserves of banks so that they don't continue dunning small to medium-sized companies to pay back loans immediately.

Such emergency actions in both countries mark the beginning of a new era of reforms that will continue into the next century, economists say.

It will be a period of restructuring, with all the difficulties that Americans recall from the 1980s and early '90s of widespread layoffs, large companies breaking up and constant merger activity.

Change will not come easy in countries that grew and prospered from economic systems in which government essentially directed funds through state banks to industrial corporations for national purposes.

Such policies lifted Japan's economy from the devastation of war to the zenith of global industry. And such policies enabled South Korea to transform an economy of agrarian surplus laborers into one of skilled industrial workers with above average education.

But both economies reached the point of diminishing returns in this decade. Skippy returns on misdirected investments proved inadequate to pay pensions or even to pay back enormous company borrowings.

Slowly, reluctantly, both countries realized that they had to open their economies internally to independent companies and decision-making and externally to the rigors of outside investment and competition.

This year's global crisis of confidence in Asia made their planned reforms all the more urgent.

Reforms can't move fast enough for Yashiro Masamoto, the Tokyo-based chairman of Citicorp Japan. He supports the government's use of public funds to protect depositors. But

he believes that Japanese chief executives could do a lot more to restructure their companies.

"Many companies sit there with overvalued real estate on their balance sheets, waiting for prices to come back," Masamoto says.

"They won't come back. They should take write-offs and get on with business." That is what US banks and companies were forced to do with bad loans and unprofitable assets in the 1980s.

Dithering at the top of Japanese companies and government has contributed to pessimism that has driven Japanese stock prices down to unrealistic levels, says Takashi Kiuchi, chief economist of the Long Term Credit Bank of Japan.

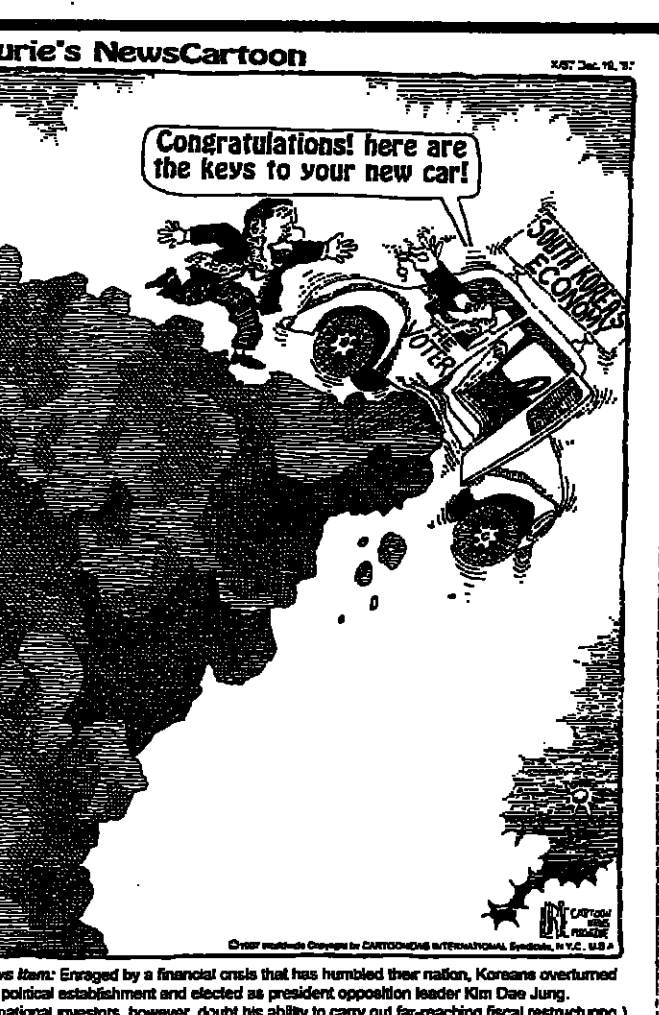
Kiuchi believes that Japan's main stock index, the Nikkei, should be 30 percent higher to reflect the underlying strength of Japan's main companies. Such thinking—along with the promise of reforms—is already attracting new foreign investment to Japan.

Merrill Lynch announced last week that it will expand its presence in Japan. And other foreign investors are looking, Masamoto reports.

In South Korea, reform is of greater urgency in a smaller economy, lacking the breadth and depth of the Japanese and US economies. Yet South Korea has a far more developed economy than those of Thailand and Malaysia, two early casualties of the Asian crisis.

South Korea has big, global companies, such as Hyundai, Daewoo, Samsung, Pohang Steel, along with less familiar names such as the Chonggu Group housing construction company that sought court protection from creditors on Saturday. The major companies, with operations all over the world, are going to have to restructure. Some of their US subsidiaries will be sold; others ultimately will be expanded.

The experience of US companies shows that small busi-



(News Item: Enraged by a financial crisis that has humbled their nation, Koreans overturned their political establishment and elected as president opposition leader Kim Dae Jung. International investors, however, doubt his ability to carry out far-reaching fiscal restructuring.)

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<div><div>▲ AQARKO ▲ La Union ▲ Arab Chemical</div><div>5.43 5.06 4.97</div><div>▼ Jordan Trade Center ▼ Arab Bank ▼ United Chemical Industry</div><div>5.77 5.14 4.95</div></div>	<div><div>▲ Industry Union ▲ AQARKO ▲ Arab Bank</div><div>5.21 5.15 5.10</div><div>▼ Al Amer Food Industry ▼ Metal Pipe ▼ Al Amer Investment</div><div>5.71 5.12 4.72</div></div>	<div><div>▲ International Textile ▲ Al Behar Insurance ▲ Rona</div><div>6.67 5.56 5.45</div><div>▼ National Cable ▼ Industrial Resources ▼ Metal Pipe</div><div>5.34 5.13 5.08</div></div>	<div><div>▲ International Textile ▲ Chemical Industry ▲ Al Behar Insurance</div><div>6.25 5.36 5.26</div><div>▼ Cooperation Bank ▼ Jordan Phosphate Mfr ▼ Jordan Industry</div><div>5.16 5.12 5.03</div></div>
General Price Pointer	168.840	168.930	170.890
Trade Volume	2458776	2334730	1160162
Stock Volume	834734	608417	976870
Highest Traded Stocks	1425400	1585760	204000
▲ Arab Bank	▲ Arab Bank	▲ Al Amer Investment	▲ Jordan Investment Bank

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646861 Fax: 64649

Afghan refugees find hard times in new homeland

By Nicholas Goldberg

MASHAD, Iran—Nearly two decades ago, when the fighting started and the food and fuel began to run out, Marziyah Hosseini left her home in Bamian, Afghanistan, on a long walk across the war-ravaged desert with her husband and two small children. For two months they traveled, sleeping on the caked dirt and hiking through the mountains, until at last they came to the Iranian border. Using their remaining money to bribe border guards, they crossed at night, and arrived, finally, at their destination: the city of Mashad, where the 9th-century Shiite martyr Imam Ali Reza is buried.

"I was so happy that we had reached Imam Reza's soil that I bent down and ate the dirt from the ground," she remembered recently. "At that time, I was pleased to leave our own country, which offered us nothing but bloodshed, fighting, hunger and murder."

That was 16 years ago, two years after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and at that time, Hosseini's path was a well-traveled one: Afghans in long turbans and brightly colored robes—Shiites and Sunnis, children and old men—were all streaming into Iran in search of peace and prosperity. Some traveled over land; some crossed at the river. Some came on donkeys, others by foot, and still others by bus.

But although they came as short-term refugees fleeing the immediate consequences of war, most never went back. To this day, Afghans are the largest group of refugees in the world. About 1.4 million of them still live in Iran, which has the dubious distinction of hosting the largest refugee population in the world. Most of the refugees have no immediate prospect of leaving.

"Many have been there as long as 20 years," said Pierre Bertrand, who runs the Tehran office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. "Are more still coming? The situation in Afghanistan could further deteriorate so that it would cause another large-scale movement."

Marziyah Hosseini is one of those who remains. In the years of their exile, her husband has

died and her children have grown up. Two weeks ago, the entire family could be found in her tiny house in the refugee neighborhood of Chorghil, shelling pistachios on the floor. For their labors, they earn about 500 Iranian rials per kilogram. Together, they can shell about five or six kilos a day, she says. That means they earn a little more than 60 cents a day. The shells they save for fuel in the stove.

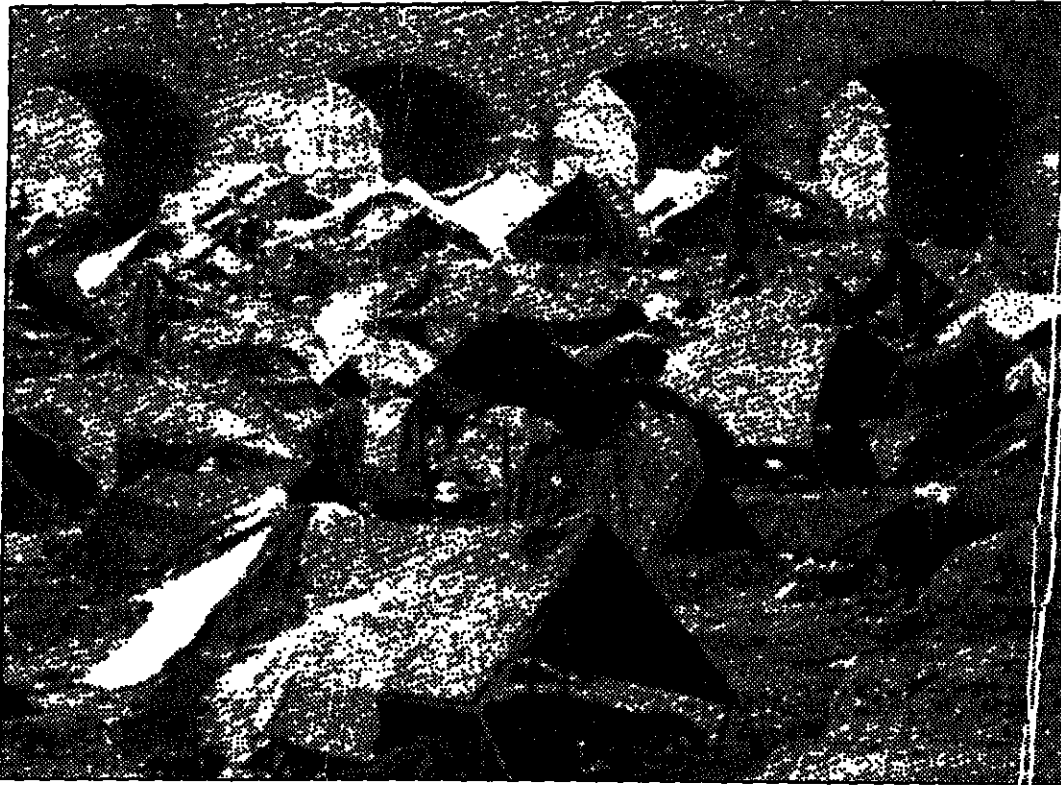
"We were unhappy in Afghanistan and we came here," she said in an interview. "Now we're here. What can we do about it? At least when we're unhappy here, we can go visit Imam Reza."

Another Afghan refugee who stayed in Iran is Ghafoor Davoodi, a 55-year-old day laborer who still wears the white turban and robe he wore at home.

Each day, he says he's out at 6 a.m. on the streets of Zahedan looking for work. If he gets nothing, he goes home. If he works, he gets 8,000 to 10,000 rials for the day—about \$2. His rent, he says, is 200,000 rials a month, or a little more than \$40. On this particular day, Davoodi has come to Mashad seeking assistance for his wife, who needs open-heart surgery. If the UN refugee agency will agree to give him money for the operation, she has a 75 percent chance of recovery, according to UN officials and doctors; if not, she will surely die within a few weeks.

Nevertheless, the officials say it is unlikely they will be able to help because they would have to forgo 10 other operations with a higher probability of success. Davoodi seems resigned. "We cannot do anything else," he said. "If you assist us, God will bless you. If not, we will simply return to Zahedan."

When the Afghan refugees first arrived at the border 20 years ago, the Iranians welcomed them. After all, they were fellow Shiites and they



Afghani refugees—the saga continues, this time it's in Iran

spoke virtually the same language. Besides, the Iranian economy was booming and the country desperately needed foreign workers to help out, particularly after the Iran-Iraq war began in 1980. In those days, there was a reception center at the border for the incoming Afghans. Refugees were given subsidized food and access to health care. They also were allowed to move relatively freely through the country, rather than being segregated in refugee camps. Over time, they spread through the eastern and central provinces and to Tehran.

But in recent years, all that has begun to change. For one thing, when the Iran-Iraq war ended in 1988 and the economy turned downward, Iranians needed the jobs the refugees held. Afghan refugees also shouldered the blame for the spread of drugs such as heroin and opium, which come in easily over the border from Afghanistan, where they are grown. In eastern Iran, where the bulk of the refugees live, crime rates increased and the refugees were blamed.

In the early 1990s, after the Soviet-backed regime fell in Afghanistan, the Iranians began to repatriate the refugees. About 1.3 million Afghans went home. But since the hard-

line Taliban militia recently took over the bulk of Afghanistan, the repatriation stopped—and a new flow of refugees into Iran has begun.

The Iranian government has recently dug a huge ditch along the border with Afghanistan, ostensibly to deter drug smugglers, but also to stop the flow of thousands of Afghans trying to sneak illegally across the frontier.

Officials have confiscated hundreds of thousands of identification cards from Afghan refugees, making them illegal aliens, without the right to work. About three years ago, the neighborhood of Chorghil, where Marziyah Hosseini lives, was surrounded by security forces and almost all the identification cards were taken away in one night. Today, in Khorasan province, government officials estimate that more than one-third of the 1 million Afghan refugees are illegal.

Although many Afghans still receive certain health services and some schooling, they're generally restricted to the lowest-paying and most hazardous jobs in the country: working in brick kilns and tanneries, or at chicken farms, pistachio farms, or well-digging sites. They now need a permit to travel.

"There's a fatigue with

them," said Roger Viviere, deputy chief of the UNHCR office in Tehran. "Iranians are harsher and tougher against Afghans than they were." Men who are without identification cards often spend their lives hiding in the house, or sneak out for a dangerous day's work: unloading trucks or doing construction or working in the sugarcane fields. If they're caught, they are taken to detention camps near the border. They help make ends meet, women and children sell pistachios at home, clean carpets or make brooms. At 7 or 8 years old, children begin working in construction sites or in the brick kilns, carrying heavy bricks back and forth. Families are large—typically between seven and nine people—and they subsist on diets primarily of bread, noodles and potatoes and a soup made out of boiled camel hooves or sheep or cow bones.

Doctors and nurses at the local clinic run by Médecins Sans Frontières, a French not-for-profit group, say it sees infectious diseases, parasites and malnutrition, the consequences of which, the group says, are disastrous.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Iranian cleric disputes Ayatollah's right to rule

By John Lancaster

QOM, Iran—Here in the birthplace of Iran's Islamic revolution, where women shroud themselves in black and burbaned clerics chaotically on busy street corners, a touch of bureaucracy is in the air. Some people are asking whether ayatollahs have a God-given right to rule. Never far from the surface in Iran, the debate over the role of religion in politics erupted last month into public view, when a leading dissident cleric, Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, openly questioned the legitimacy of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In a speech to followers, which was reproduced on leaflets and widely distributed, Montazeri suggested that Khamenei is insufficiently qualified for his post. Even more audaciously, he seemed to question the basis of Iran's theocratic government, a system known as velayat-e faqih, a form of individual rule based on Islamic jurisprudence. Khamenei's hard-line backers reacted with fury, giving a green light to thugs who ransacked Montazeri's home and office and orchestrating a week-long series of pro-Khamenei demonstrations around the nation. Khamenei eventually called for an end to such displays, but not before he had accused Montazeri, 75, of treason and denounced his followers as collaborators.

More than theological principles are at stake. In Iran's presidential election last May, voters overwhelmingly rejected the candidate of religious hard-liners in favor of Mohammed Khatami, a moderate cleric who has sought to promote greater personal freedom and the rule of law and who recently called for dialogue with the people of the United States. Although Khatami has remained aloof from the controversy over Montazeri's remarks and repeatedly has affirmed loyalty to Khamenei, the unusual public criticism of the country's highest religious and political authority has added to the impression among foreign diplomats of a deepening power struggle between religious hard-liners and supporters of the new president. "Khamenei probably has been weakened by having his credentials questioned so openly," a Western diplomat said, suggesting that

the criticism has damaged his "aura of papal infallibility." The matter is far from settled. Last week, according to Iran's official news agency, police arrested Ibrahim Yazdi, leader of the Islamic Freedom Movement, a liberal opposition group that is illegal in Iran but tolerated. Yazdi, a US-educated geneticist, is one of about 50 Iranian dissidents who recently signed a petition calling on authorities to respect Montazeri's right to free speech.

"In Iran, any idea about religion can be reflected and translated immediately into politics," said Abdelkarim Soroush, a well-known philosopher and dissident who lost his teaching post at Tehran University several years ago for questioning the legitimacy of clerical rule. "There are many people, even clergy, who have qualms and questions about velayat-e faqih. It is not universally accepted." What is especially striking about the burgeoning debate over Islamic rule is that it erupted in Qom, a city of more than a quarter-million people on a flat plain 80 miles south of Tehran.

With its seminaries and gold-domed shrine, Qom is the center of Shiite Muslim religious training in Iran. It also was the home of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who led the Islamic revolution that toppled the pro-American monarchy in 1979. The principle of velayat-e faqih was enshrined by Khomeini, who exercised dual political and religious authority in Iran until his death in 1989. And here the plot thickens: Khomeini's top deputy and heir-apparent was Montazeri. Shortly before his death in 1989, Khomeini fell out with Montazeri and sent him into internal exile in Qom.

Yet Montazeri has maintained a high profile, operating a theological school and developing a sizable following among younger clerics. The content of his celebrated lecture last month has not been detailed in the Iranian press.



Montazeri

But according to diplomatic sources and Iranian academics with knowledge of the episode, Montazeri launched a personal attack on Khamenei, belittling his religious credentials and assailing him for "living like a king" while ordinary Iranians suffer. Even more threatening to hard-liners, perhaps, was Montazeri's suggestion that the supreme leader should function as a "supervisor" rather than governing directly—an apparent challenge to the concept of velayat-e faqih. Khamenei, at least, appears to have interpreted it that way: "I want you to defend the principle of velayat-e faqih," he told followers recently. "We must defend the backbone of the Islamic system." In an interview here, one of Khamenei's closest allies elaborated on that view, describing him as a kind of father figure without whom society surely would go astray. "Most people, especially young people, they don't analyze things well," said Ayatollah Meshkini Yazdi, head of the Khomeini Institute for Training and Research, the largest seminary in Qom. "In a family, the parents try to educate and inform their children to know the facts and distinguish bad from good, and we have the same role in our society. We don't go for the majority, we listen to a single man, because he's a specialist who knows good from bad."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

'Apocalypse Now'

Continued from page 4

only country involved in this crisis that has never had to fight a war on its own soil. It is easy for the US and its mostly brain-washed citizens to speak in apocalyptic terms. A report out of Australia on Sunday, November 16 suggests that Israel and the US are thinking about a neutron bomb on Baghdad.

Unfortunately the dictates of raw power are very severe and, for a weak state like Iraq, overwhelming. Certainly US misuse of the sanctions to strip Iraq of everything, including any possibility for security is monstrous. The so-called UN 661 Committee created to oversee the sanctions is composed of 15 member states (including the US) each of which has a veto. Every time Iraq passes this committee a request to sell oil for medicines, trucks, meat, etc., any member of the committee can block these requests by saying that a given item may have military purposes (tires, for example, or ambulances). In addition the US and its clients—eg., the unpleasant and racist Richard Butler, who says openly that Arabs have a different notion of truth than the rest of the world—have made it clear that even if Iraq is completely reduced militarily to the point where it is no longer a threat to its neighbors (which is now the case) the real goal of the sanctions is to topple Saddam Hussein's government. In other words according to the Americans, very little that Iraq can do short of Saddam's resignation or death will produce a lifting of sanctions.

Finally, we should not for a moment forget that quite apart from its foreign policy interest, Iraq has now become a domestic American issue whose repercussions on issues unrelated to oil or the Gulf are very important. Bill Clinton's personal interest—the campaign-funding scandals, an impending trial for sexual harassment, his various legislative and domestic failures—require him to look strong, determined and "presidential" somewhere else, and where but in the Gulf against Iraq has he so ready-made a foreign devil to set off his blue-eyed strength to full advantage. Moreover, the increase in military expenditure for new investments in electronic "smart" weaponry, more sophisticated aircraft, mobile forces for the

world-wide projection of American power are perfectly suited for display and use in the Gulf, where the likelihood of visible casualties (actually suffering Iraqi civilians) is extremely small, and where the new military technology can be put through its paces most attractively. For reasons that need restating here, the media is particularly happy to go along with the government in bringing home to domestic customers the wonderful excitement of American self-righteousness, the proud flag-waving, the "feel-good" sense that "we" are facing down a monstrous dictator. Far from analysis and calm reflection the media exists mainly to derive its mission from the government, not to produce a corrective or any dissent. The media, in short, is an extension of the war against Iraq.

The saddest aspect of the whole thing is that Iraqi civilians seem condemned to additional suffering and protracted agony. Neither their government nor that of the US is inclined to ease the daily pressure on them, and the probability that only they will pay for the crisis is extremely high. At least—and it isn't very much—there seems to be no enthusiasm among Arab governments for American military action, but beyond that there is no coordinated Arab position, not even on the extremely grave humanitarian question. It is unfortunate that, according to the news, there is rising popular support for Saddam in the Arab world, as if the old lessons of defiance without real power have still not been learned.

Undoubtedly the US has manipulated the UN to its own ends, a rather shameful exercise given at the same time that the Congress once again struck down a motion to pay a billion dollars in arrears to the world organization. The major priority for Arabs, Europeans, Muslims and Americans is to push to the fore the issue of sanctions and the terrible suffering imposed on innocent Iraqi civilians. Taking the case to the International Court in the Hague strikes me as a perfectly viable possibility, but what is needed is a concerted will on behalf of Arabs who have suffered the US's egregious blows for too long without an adequate response.

MER

Israeli warrior Sharon, long out of favor, wields power anew

By James Rupert

ALFEE MENASHE, Occupied West Bank—Israeli journalists swarmed over a rocky hilltop at this Jewish settlement last week, recording a visit by cabinet ministers here to study the strategic features of the landscape below.

The politicians had swooped in aboard army helicopters as part of a "West Bank tour" to see what lands Israel should aim to keep in any final peace settlement with the Palestinians, and what it might return. The government had invited journalists to transmit its main message to its center-right constituency—that it intends to give up nothing to the Palestinians that would endanger Israel's security.

But as Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai voiced that theme from a podium, some of the dozens of Israeli journalists wandered aside to gather around Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon. The official event ended, ministers left to be picked up by the helicopters—and Mordechai drifted by, making himself available for comment.

But Sharon held the journalists' attention until he left. After years on the political margins and in some disgrace, Sharon is back on Israel's center stage. With the right wing pushed to peacemaking, he is unavoidable; in three decades as an army commander and right-wing politician, he has built himself a political franchise as Mr. Israeli Security.

As the Clinton administration presses Israel to hand over more West Bank land to the Palestinians to help revive the stalled peace process, Sharon is an influential decider of how Israel will respond. For right-wing Israelis, who form perhaps one-third of the electorate and a political pillar of the government, "there is no other

person who can speak...with as much authority on security issues," said Nahum Barnea, a columnist for the newspaper *Yedioth Aharnoth*.

That has led US officials recently to make more time for Sharon, a man Washington had long kept at a distance, seeing him as an obstacle to peacemaking because of his role in expanding Jewish settlements in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories.

In Washington in November, Sharon had his first appointment at the White House, meeting national security adviser Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger. This month, Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk went to visit Sharon at his ranch in Israel's southern Negev region.

It is not by design of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Sharon helps hold the reins of Israeli peacemaking. After Sharon delivered right-wing votes in last year's election to help Netanyahu squeak into office, the prime minister refused him any major cabinet seat.

Only after Foreign Minister David Levy threatened publicly to resign over Sharon's exclusion, Netanyahu assembled his six of six other ministries to create a cabinet post for Sharon, overseeing the state's big infrastructure projects.

But in 18 turbulent months in power, Netanyahu has had to rely often on Sharon. In the most public instance, His Majesty King Hussein refused even to speak to Netanyahu this fall after the prime minister had approved an assassination attempt in Jordan against a leader of the militant Palestinian movement Hamas. When two Israeli intelligence officers were captured while attempting the killing, it was Sharon who negotiated their release.

This month, Netanyahu invited Sharon to join him. Mordechai and Levy as the cabinet's core policy group on security



Sharon

issues and peacemaking. That return to the center of power is the latest of Sharon's many comebacks.

Sharon, his hair white and his 69-year-old body sagging heavily, has been in battle in some way or another since he fought as a teenager in the 1948 Arab-Jewish war. In Israel's subsequent wars, he made a habit of hit tactics and brush battlefield garrisons.

Sharon took that style into politics, where he helped found the Likud Party. In Likud's first government, he led the policy of tightening Israel's grip on captured Arab lands by implanting Jewish settlements throughout them.

But in 1982, his greatest military gamble derailed his ca-

reer. As defense minister, he escalated a punitive strike into Lebanon, sending the Israeli army all the way to Beirut.

That forced the expulsion of Palestine Liberation Organization, which had used Lebanon as a base for attacking Israel. But it also permitted the Lebanese massacre of Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut and mired Israel in a three-year war in which 650 Israeli troops died—a war that proved a political disaster.

Sharon was forced to resign, and for 15 years, he has battled accusations that he exceeded his orders deliberately and lied to cabinet colleagues to hide his plan to seize Beirut. Last month, he lost a libel suit

against the daily newspaper *Haaretz*, when an Israeli judge ruled that evidence showed he had misled the government.

Now, in a position of power for the first time since Israel committed itself to making peace with the Palestinians, Sharon has had to give up the principle to which he had lashed his flag: no land concessions and no Palestinian state in the West Bank.

Sharon has had to join more-moderate rightists in shifting the discussion to just what land should be given up, and under what conditions. And where other right-wing politicians seem to prefer more nuance, the plain-spoken Sharon says flatly that Arafat's Palestinian National Authority, in ruling several West Bank towns and the Gaza Strip, effectively has become the state he once ruled out.

This upsets many of his longtime supporters among the West Bank's Jewish settlers.

When the cabinet visited here, Hanna Goffer, a middle-aged secretary from the settlement of Kedumim was one of a handful of protesters waving signs.

No Palestinian state can be permitted, Goffer said. "But Ariel Sharon is forgetting that to win you have to struggle," she said. "He is talking again like in the days of Camp David," the US-backed peace process that led Israel to return the Sinai region to Egypt.

She recalled that Sharon, then a general, forced the evacuation and abandonment of the Jewish settlement of Yamit in Sinai, and she mused over which West Bank settlements he might ultimately choose to sacrifice.

With the Clinton administration pushing Israel to hand over at least 10 percent of West Bank territory as a step in restarting peacemaking, Israel's cabinet has insisted that it first

must map out Israel's vital security interests in the West Bank.

In that process, which precipitated the cabinet's helicopter tour, Sharon and Mordechai have produced rival maps. Sharon seeks to girdle the West Bank in two Israeli-controlled "security zones," running north to south—about six miles wide along the border with Israel proper, and 12 miles wide along that with Jordan.

Sharon also wants Israel to keep three east-west corridors, to ensure transit across the West Bank, as well as control over the main underground aquifer and all 144 Jewish settlements in the territory. To do all that, his map would have Israel keep about 65 percent of the West Bank—including areas where nearly half of the territory's 1.1 million Palestinians live.

Mordechai's map—similar, but with narrower security zones—would have Israel keep about 50 percent of the West Bank. Mordechai has said perhaps one-third of the Jewish settlements serve no Israeli security interest, raising the prospect that they could be sacrificed.

Palestinians, US officials and some Israelis have dismissed both plans as unrealistic. "There is no chance the Palestinians will buy them," said Zeev Schiff, a security specialist for *Haaretz*.

They represent "an internal debate over Israel's opening position" in whatever next round of peace talks the Americans may set, Schiff said.

Eventually, Sharon will have to choose between his longtime commitment to the settlements and the possibility of a negotiated peace, Schiff said.

"Who knows what his final direction will be?" he asked.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

World sport

Best sporting moments of 1997

THE YEAR 1997 had some of the best moments. There was surprises across the board, in tennis, football, motor racing and golf. This is to name but a few. However, everybody is asking whether horse-racing will survive into the next century? What follows is collective effort by the Financial Times sports team.

Football

Despite its billing as a dress rehearsal for this year's World Cup, the Tournoi de France, a four-way international tournament between England, Brazil, France and Italy, was widely derided as a meaningless coda to the exertions of last season. But the very fact that all four teams realistically hoped to win the game's ultimate prize gave the tournament a compelling edge.

This was nowhere better seen than in England's opening game against Italy, seen as a chance to inflict a psychological blow in anticipation of the World Cup qualifier between the two countries four months later.

On paper, Italy looked the stronger side. England coach Glenn Hoddle took the chance to look at some of his younger players: Phil Neville, Paul Scholes, David Beckham in central midfield. But surely Italian wiles would once more carry the day England had lost to Italy at Wembley, and Manchester United had twice been humbled by a thrilling Juventus side.

But it was the Italians who were caught cold first when Scholes, making his first full appearance, flighted a perfect pass for Ian Wright to finish with customary confidence, then when Wright returned the favour for Scholes to lash home a left-footed volley past Angelo Peruzzi.

That match-sealing second goal, ebullient as it was technically adroit, was to prove an important turning point in Anglo-Italian relations.

This season, both England and Manchester United have out-performed Italian sides; there is now no gap in expertise, no gulf in quality.

There were wider implications too: England's ostracism from "sophisticated" European football was ended; Italy's supreme self-confidence as the world's premier footballing power was badly dented. And by the way, Scholes has developed into one of the most exciting international prospects in Europe. All in all, quite a goal.

Rugby

Rugby union's funniest moment, for those with any sense of irony, found Saracens and Harlequins complaining about inflated player salaries. Its best matches saw the magnificent All Blacks, whose sheer resilience was the least remarked aspect of their greatness, forced to come from way behind by opponents South Africa at Johannesburg in July, England at Twickenham in December inspired rather than intimidated by the task before them.

But the game's Man of 1997 was Jeremy Guscott, not just for the series-winning drop-goal for the British Lions at Durban. For most of the year he was the man who wasn't there unwarned by England in the spring, injured in the summer. England played 880 minutes of Test rugby in 1997, of which Guscott managed 43 minutes less than 5 per cent.

Regular readers may have divined that I am happier when Wales are scoring rather



The Brazilian team

than conceding tries. But Guscott at Cardiff, on the last day of the Five Nations, transcended national chauvinism.

The first half, and both teams, had been tight, fitful and frankly mediocre. Guscott's arrival brought a transformation.

His ability to change pace and direction, the combination of innate spatial awareness and athleticism that spots minimal gaps and goes through them and is denied to all but the most sublimely gifted, created tries for Stimpson and Hill. Only an ankle tap by Jonathan Davies, once capable of comparable deeds but reduced on his last Test appearance to the roles of valiant defender and admiring onlooker, stopped Guscott scoring.

If your team has to lose, let it be like this, mesmerized and beguiled by what makes rugby worth watching, not pulped by tactics that make you wonder whether it is. And, under Clive Woodward, England may at last play the game to make the best of Guscott. No matter that he's 32. If he's good enough and no doubt of that he's young enough.

American football
American football is not for pacifists. Very large, very hard, with very hard helmets, are likely to inflict physical damage on those they would block, tackle or otherwise lay low. So it is not surprising that injuries have been the leitmotif of the last year on the gridiron.

Most unfortunately, a busted knee in the first quarter of the season's opening match deprived the game of the previously indestructible Jerry Rice of the San Francisco 49ers, the greatest of pass-catchers. (He came back, incredibly, for the 15th game of the season but damaged it again, catching a touchdown pass.) Only minutes later in that first game, Steve Young, his fine quarterback, suf-

fered his umpteenth concussion.

Quarterbacks have sometimes seemed an endangered species, though not sturdy Brett Favre of the champion Green Bay Packers.

Poor Gus Fretz of the Washington Redskins even did himself in by headbutting the stadium wall in celebration of a touchdown. He missed the second half with a sprained neck and the very next week had his hip broken in a tackle but still completed the game.

Sometimes, the effect of injuries is cumulative. Young recovered to lead the 49ers to another fine year, although his admirers believe the next bang to the head should induce him to retire. Emmitt Smith, the marvelous Dallas running back, has clearly been slowed by his long collection of aches and pains, while Jay Novacek, the invaluable tight end, had to quit on doctor's orders. It is no wonder that the Cowboys are in decline.

There are also incapacitating dirty fouls. With so much mayhem going on, this is difficult for the referees to catch, but the late Dallas hit that broke the elbow of Leslie Shepherd, the Redskins receiver, looked singularly egregious in the TV replays although it went unpunished on the field. There is talk of introducing a yellow card or "points" system for persistent offenders.

Athletics

Far from the delirium which attended the six world records made in 12 days by Kenyan athletes this summer, in a quiet rose garden in rural Kenya, I met a man who had a seminal role in creating the records. Colin O'Connell, a former teacher at St Patrick's High School in 1976, and got press-ganged into helping coach young runners.

When the colleague moved to Colm, as he is universally known, holding the stop watch. First, a correspondence course in coaching when St Patrick's, which was a boys' school, moved to a Technical College nearby. Twenty years on, only he is responsible for more than a dozen Olympic champions and record holders to the sport. He is single-handedly ensuring the success of an idea to mark his first year of an idea to mark his first year of nearly 15 years ago. He gave me a tour of the bushes, with their hand-painted dedications. "Charles and Kip Cheruiyot, junior world record breakers in the 1,500 and 5,000 metres, 1983; Peter Rono, Olympic 1,500 champion, 1988; Jonah Birir, Olympic steeplechase champion, 1992; Wilson Kipketer, 1995 world 800 metres champion of course, I've got a few things to add there." He could also have added Moses Kiptanui, Daniel Komen, Sally Barsosio, and many others.

At a training session, I was surprised to hear him ask the kids what they wanted to do that day. "I learned how to coach by listening to the kids, them telling me how they felt. Now I just give them the outline, tell them what I learned from their predecessors. The rest is up to them."

That is real teaching, not just helping them to run well, but how to take charge of their lives. You can't get much better than that.

Cricket

It is a rare pleasure to find a moment of nobility in cricket. I have no hesitation in declaring my moment of the year to be the one I witnessed in the NatWest quarter-finals between Nottinghamshire and Essex at Trent Bridge. Nottinghamshire's captain, Paul Johnson, scored 106, despite an injured finger, to lead his county splendidly to 288 for 5 in their 50 overs.

This season's new Trent Bridge groundman, Steve Birks, was producing livelier pitches than the "flatties" of the year before, making bowling more dangerous to face and finger injuries such as Johnson's more common among batsmen.

year before, making bowling more dangerous to face and finger injuries such as Johnson's more common among batsmen.

But Johnson's honesty about a marginal failing he made in the field was not common. It earned him a spontaneous round of applause from the crowd, who were not used to seeing such behaviour, and it should, in my opinion, also have earned him the Man of the Match award, which was given to the match-winning Nasser

Hussain

Fielders, like batsmen, had to cope with lively bounces and as a fielder Hussain managed a direct hit run-out to offset the three catches he missed. He then topped for Essex, with 89, helping them to 289 for 7 in 58.2 overs, victory by 3 wickets. This was thanks to Johnson's admission to the umpires that he had not clearly held his early catch of Hussain: the ball was just touching the ground as he took it. So Hussain batted on.

You could view this as an easy way to lose the match and with it any chance of the NatWest Trophy. I prefer to view it as a rare example of cricketing nobility.

Golf

A year of bountiful riches: a memorable Ryder Cup, the best US Open in a decade, and a victory for tiny Alison Nicholas over the behemoth Nancy Lopez in a captivating duel for the leading women's prize.

Most of all, however, the year was made epochal by the performances of the game's so-called "generation next", who swept aside the established order. Their totem, of course, was the extraordinary Tiger Woods.

Yes, his year tailed off and from July to December he was reassuringly mortal. But for six

months he held not only his sport in thrall, but his country as well and nothing that happened in golf in 1997 really compares with four astonishing days in April when he claimed his first major championship at his first attempt as a professional.

People don't win the Masters at the age of 21, we poo-pooed in advance. When he took 40 to reach the turn on the first day, we smiled wisely. What happened next, though, emphasized that in Woods the game has a master who makes his own rules.

Having given the field a four shot head-start, such was the quality of his golf from then on that he was lapping everyone by round four, and would eventually win by 12 shots. What is more, he lowered Jack Nicklaus's record 72 hole score of 271, set in 1965, by a stroke.

Across a nation, a new audience tuned in to a new sport. The following week, it is estimated that 2m young people in the US, spread broadly across all races and creeds, tried golf for the first time.

The fact that their curiosity had been stirred by events at Augusta, once a bastion of middle-aged white supremacy, added a richly satisfying element of symbolism.

Baseball

Inevitably, the defining moment of the baseball season did not happen on the field of play. It was the midsummer announcement that agreement in principle had been reached for the O'Malley family to sell the Los Angeles Dodgers, whom they had shipped from Brooklyn 40 years earlier, to the Fox Group, which is controlled by Rupert Murdoch.

The deal must still be approved by baseball's other 29 team owners, some of whom, like Ted Turner of CNN and the Atlanta Braves, are not exactly fans of the international media baron. But the current betting is that enough of these illustrious ostriches will not lift their heads from the sands.

If they did, they would surely conclude that the sport with Murdoch will never be the same again, particularly since he is out of their league as an operator of businesses. At one level, it may run to even higher player pay, topless female umpires, bingo between innings and Bart Simpson replacing the literate Vin Scully as Dodger broadcaster.

At the other, it must mean more and more baseball on pay-per-view television, as has happened with British soccer and Australian rugby league, and even less revenue sharing between the rich and poor sides, because Murdoch is not a philanthropist.

On the field, a sub-par season was most memorable for the pitching of Mike Mussina of the Baltimore Orioles in the play-offs. The first baseball game I ever saw on television in 1963 while stranded at Sacramento airport featured the great Sandy Koufax of the Dodgers mowing down the New York Yankees. Suffice it to say that Mussina (29 innings, 42 strike-outs, only 11 hits in four games) was in that spine-tingling, take-me-out-to-the-old-ball-game league. ■

Financial Times Syndication

Motor racing



Jacques Villeneuve

THERE'S NO other choice, is there? Lap 48, European Grand Prix, Jerez; 1997's final race: the world championship at stake, and the tight Dry Sack right-hander looming...

Michael Schumacher, his Ferrari's mirrors full of the Williams of a Jacques Villeneuve needing just one point for the title, did not expect the Canadian's breathtaking lunge to claim the lead. He turned in as if Villeneuve did not exist. And when they hit, as would be shown by the Gato camera on his Ferrari, he turned in hard again.

The result was Schumacher himself stuck in the gravel trap; Villeneuve romping off to become world champion. But even Schuey knew it was for the best. Had Villeneuve been sidelined and Schumacher continued, the German inevitably, and rightly, would have been stripped of the title.

Max Mosley, president of motor sport's governing body, the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, justified the subsequent inquiry's leniency cancelling Schumacher's 1997 points on the grounds that Schumacher's action had been deliberate, but instinctive not premeditated.

The assessment was self-serving to Formula One, allowing Schumacher to race next year and keep up TV audiences. But it was also defensible, despite media outrage and the predictable piety of other drivers claiming they would do no such thing.

Motor racing has become safer over the years but is still a potentially lethal sport for all that its ongoing fatalities the most recent at Britain's Oulton Park only last month go unremarked by the national press.

The risks, shovelled to the back of the mind, nevertheless sharply heightened tension and the aggression already inherent in all Formula One drivers' will to win. Schumacher, given a millisecond to react, did so vehemently and in a manner eternally to his discredit but it was instinctive nonetheless.

The irony, for Schumacher and an audience robbed of a fair fight to the finish, is that premeditation would have led him to let Villeneuve through. For such a collision, with so much at stake, would always have been impossible for Schumacher to explain away. ■

EVERY YEAR

numerous thrilling horse races, 1997, one of the most exciting anywhere was the annual Bessy The Dip, a truly tough test of the English Derby at Epsom, where the season, Bessy The Dip, was the Kentucky, from where for a life at stud that will be a magical moment.

Yet the highlight of the racing season came late in December 9, when Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum, of Dubai, and his horse-mad brother, Khalid, offered to buy the patience with the low call of money on offer in Britain, where their horses are stationed.

The Maktoums own horses. There is the biggest ever assembled.

The cost: unknown billions. The way Britain, alone among nations, siphons grand sums out of Treasury greed; arguably, the Punters are being fleeced.

The Maktoums will certainly not be the first to see that higher prize money is a good thing, but they are not good.

More important, if unwittingly, the Maktoums have set into motion a global horse racing's chances of survival, as they have done for subsidies from gambling. As a result, racing is no longer a purely economic big-time sport of cash.

Gambling-wise, horse racing is no longer a purely economic big-time sport of cash. Thrills at 30-minute intervals. However, when the race happens, race horses will become obsolete. The over-dependence on subsidy, horse racing is in the danger zone.



Tennis

IT IS a little after 1.45pm on Saturday, March 29. The south Florida air is heavy with humidity. Many of the 14,000 spectators, suitably protected with sunscreen and headgear, are fanning themselves as they watch the two energetic figures dashing about the centre court at Crandon Park.

All are conscious of the historic nature of this Lipton final in Key Biscayne.

If Martina Hingis, already the Australian Open champion and riding a winning streak of five

tournaments and 28 matches, beats Monica Seles this afternoon, she will become, at 16½, the youngest player ever to be ranked No 1 in the world.

The pain on Seles's sweat-streaked face is all too apparent as she lunges helplessly at the balls that fly past her outstretched racket. The first set is already lost; eight games of ruthless, early-ball aggression from the tearaway teenager.

One can only guess at the thoughts racing through Seles's as she fights for survival. Perhaps she remembers that moment on March 11 1991 when, aged 17 years, three months and nine days, she had overtaken Steffi Graf to become the youngest world No 1.

In those days, she was the one whose rasping two-fisted drives, taken on the rise and accompanied by an audible grunt, swept aside all opposition.

The eighth Grand Slam title she won in January 1993, a magnificent three-set battle against Graf in Melbourne, had set her on course to become the greatest woman player of all time.

On April 30 that year in Hamburg, Gunther Parche had ended all hope of that. Perhaps, as Hingis hits the winning shot to complete her 6-2 6-1 victory, Seles feels



Seles



Hingis

again the sharp stab of Parche's wicked blade. Quelling the pain of defeat, she graciously acknowledges the enormous potential in her young con-queror.

It is a defining moment. In the months ahead, Hingis will exceed even the wildest predictions, despite a riding accident that will require knee surgery and keep her off court for five weeks. By the year's end, now 17 and the owner of three Grand Slam crowns, she will have set new standards of achievement for young players that would have seemed impossible even two years ago. ■

05.1.1998



Marriott holds Christmas dinner for children

IT WAS a fun time for the children of the Mar Mansour Charity at Christmas Day. The Amman Marriott especially organized a dinner party for the children and employees of the society. Lots of presents were distributed to the children. ■



Islamic Designs

A voyage of self discovery

By Kofi Attah
Special to The Star

Once in a while one comes across a rare form of painting that defies the rules which is drilled into art students at professional schools. A good example is silk painting. It is a decorative kind of art which has certain techniques for handling colors and drawings on silk.

It became known to the world after the Russian revolution, and when some Russian artists migrated to France after 1917. From then on,

French artists found the golden values of silk paintings. They imitated and helped to spread it around the world.

The unique and rare, but charming silk painting titled 'Islamic Designs' by Hatouf Hijazi Tabba'a which is currently on display at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Center—Artisana, intends to do two things: to invigorate this kind of art and bring back to the minds and hearts of arts lovers the exuberant riches of it.

Islamic Designs with its down to earth facts that is backed up by the epigraph of verses from the Holy Koran and replica of Turkish miniatures is a 'real voyage of self discovery'.

"I want to rediscover myself through silk painting," says Al Tabba'a. Her choice of theme—Islamic Designs—and the works on display could be argued as a gigantic step forward.

It's an entire voyage of rediscovering and revisiting the rich Islamic values. Her biggest painting on display a 1.75x1 is made up of sketches on silk and filled the colors bearing two *Surats* from the Koran—*Surat Al Nas* and *Al Falaq*. Expectedly, at JD 1600, this attracts the highest price of all the exhibit on display.

At the entrance of the hall is a magnificent



painting of a Turkish Khalifa in a courtyard admiring a group of dancing people. At the right section of the entrance hall are paintings focusing on stories of Prophets such as Jesus, Joseph, Lot and Mohammed (may peace be upon him). The paintings which reflect a true appearance narrate the achievements of the Prophets. The painting of Joseph relates the life of Joseph and his experience with his brethren.

Al Tabba'a, who obtained a BA in fine arts from the American University of Beirut in 1973, is very skillful in the unusual form of art expression saying 'silk painting' is very difficult. "For example it took me two months to finish the painting of *Surat Al Nas* and *Al Falaq* the biggest one." She says. Al Tabba'a is careful with her choice of paintings in view of her Islamic and religious background and using as an effective tool to communicate with her admirers.

Seven out of her 36 exhibits are Turkish miniatures, which inspires her most—the pieces cost between JD 125 and JD 250. The miniatures portray Turkish mosques, reflec-

tions of Ottoman occupation and domination of the Arab world. At the same time they portray the conservation of memories, of a once great Islamic empire that stretched from Hungary to Asia through to north Africa.

All the paintings of the exhibition 'are made with silk and 'guta'—a form of glue that gives it special and outstanding touches. This is only the painter's second exhibition but has already established herself as one of the most renowned Jordanian Artists. Her paintings on pure silk and guta places her far above many traditional artists.

Overall, Islamic Designs, the ways of writing, Arabesque and miniatures on silk is full of gaiety that would surely hold the visitor's interest. The exhibition is lively and telling. It will probably come as something of a shock to those who consider women not powerful to promote and spread Islamic values through arts.

The exhibition is on display till 15 January, at Artisana—Jabal Amman 2nd Circle. ■

UNICEF gets £5 million gift from British Airways

PASSENGERS FLYING with British Airways have raised a record-breaking £5 million for the children's charity UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) by donating

loose coins and notes from overseas trips.

Money is collected on board British Airways aircrafts by passengers donating unwanted foreign currency

at a rate of £120,000 a month.

The "Change for Good" appeal is helping children in the UK and in more than 40 countries worldwide.

Tim Phillips, British Airways Head of Community Relations said: "This is a tremendous achievement and I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all our passengers. It would have not been possible without their continued generosity, and the dedication of our cabin crew."

Robert Smith, Executive Director of the UK Committee for UNICEF said: "So many of the coins collected would have ended up in a safe place but forgotten and unused. With British Airways we have been able to change this 'dead' money into life for millions of children around the world. Working with British Airways we were able to bring real hope to the world's greatest asset—the future of our children." ■

A Thank you visit by the Inter-Continental Hotel to the nurses of the Italian Hospital



PART OF THE Twelve days activities before Christmas, an Inter-Continental team visits the Italian Hospital. The team thanked the Hospital's nurses and the management for their

excellent service given to the Jordanian Community. The Hotel presented the nursing staff with some small gifts and wished them all the success for the years to come. ■

Keaton, Besinger and Nicholson in epic Batman premiers

TAKE A TRIP in the famous Bat mobile with Super Movies. Orbit's premium movie channel, to eerie Gotham City for the epic Batman movies, premiering this month. Batman Returns and Batman Forever will be premiering on the first three Thursdays of January, 1998 at 2000 GMT. All features a star studded cast of good, bad and beautiful people in these multi-million dollar budget movies, jam packed with impressive and explosive special effects.

The man behind the signature black mask is Hollywood actor Michael Keaton. He is accompanied in Batman by a strong supporting cast including Kim Basinger as inquisitive photographer Vicki Vale and renowned Hollywood actor Jack Nicholson as the evil Joker.

In Batman Returns, Batman is up against the winged Penguin, played by the hilarious and extremely short, Danny De Vito. The Penguin teams up with evil tycoon Max Shreck (Christopher

Walken) and it is up to Batman to stop them building a power plant intended to drain Gotham of all its energy. The beautiful Michelle Pfeiffer plays Catwoman and vows vengeance on Gotham City.

Joel Schumacher took over from Tim Burton to direct the third installment of the series, Batman Forever, selecting Val Kilmer to star as Batman. Kilmer rose to the challenge of sporting the bat mask and cape, however his Bat career came to an abrupt end after his on set clash with Schumacher. Batman's right hand man Robin is played by Chris O'Donnell in a role which confirms his status as a growing star. The bad guys in Batman Forever are Tommy Lee Jones playing the schizophrenic D.A. Harvey Two Face, Dent, who has megalomaniac plans to take over Gotham City and Jim Carrey, the Riddler. Apart from Robin, Batman also has the beautiful police psychologist Doctor Chase Meridian, played by Nicole Kidman, on his side. ■



Daily lump sums and grand prize for orbit's Ramadan Quiz

MONDAY, DECEMBER 29

Orbit launched its RAMADAN

QUIZ with daily

prizes of \$600 and a

final Grand Prize for

those having correctly

responded to ques-

tions on Arabic music,

entertainment and

film. Viewers have 24

hours to call the num-

ber 001 416 544 4644.

All callers who give

the correct answer to

any day's question

will automatically

enter the Grand Prize

draw. The more cor-

rect answers provided,

the greater the chances

of winning the Grand

Prize. The daily ORBIT RAMA-

DAN QUIZ airs at 4:00 PM (GMT time),

concurrently on The

Hollywood Channel

and on Orbit's free-to-

air.

Promotional

Channel, for those with satellite

dishes pointing at Arabsat 2A.

In addition, for the period of

Ramadan, Orbit is offering a

50% discount on the Orbit digi-

tal receiver for those selecting

any one of the 40 ser-

vices on the menu

choice.

On the following

evening the winner is

announced and the

next question posed

on air. All Daily Prize

winners will be asked

if they would be will-

ing to appear on TV

and may be contacted

by Orbit.

Broadcast from

Orbit's studios in

Rome, the five minute

quiz show presented

by Malda introduces

its theme with video

clips or clips from

popular films and

announces the ques-

tion of the day. Orbit

viewers who miss the

daily show, can watch

for various on-air

promise running

across the Orbit network

announcing the question of

the day and the prizes to be won.

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



Things from Ipanema



With the surgical team passed out, and with help from the observation deck, hospital custodian Leonard Krudson suddenly became responsible for bringing Mr. Gruenfeld "home."



"This is it, Maurice! I've warned you to keep your hens off me!"



"Yeah. My boss don't appreciate me either. To him I'm just a gofer. 'Igor! Go for brains! ... Igor! Go for dead bodies! ... Igor! Go for sandwiches! ... I dunno — give me another beer.'"

For Sale

Original Lithographs by David Roberts, Winsor McClean, Petra Lebanon and Holly Field. Also 19th century engravings by W.B. Bartlett. For information, please call 601-805

The Star's Guide

Programs on JTV
from 3 — 9 January

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY

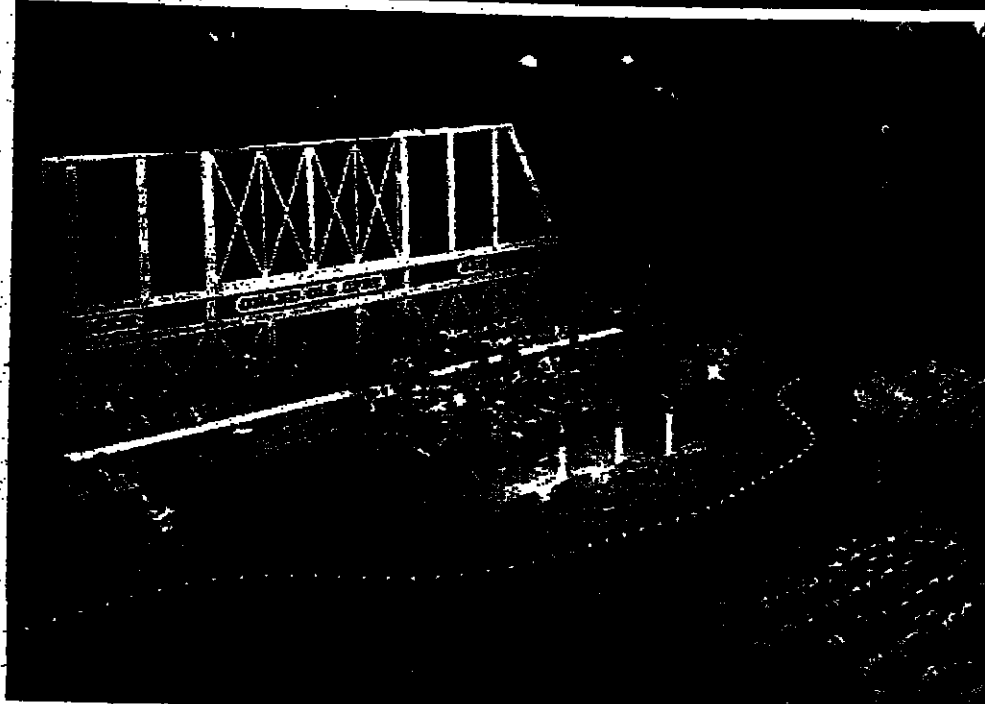
2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Twinkle
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—NBA Games
6:00—Neighbors
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—You Bet Your Life
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Perspective
8:00—Cinema: Cinema
8:30—Prison
9:10—Time Trax
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Feature Film: *Black Velvet Gown*
12:00—Country Music
12:30—Islam in a Changing World

SUNDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—The Pink Panther
2:15—Johnny Quest
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Energy Express
5:30—Tarzan
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—America's Funniest People
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Black Hat Chef
8:00—Dad's Army
8:30—Killing for a Living
9:10—Renegade
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—North & South
11:10—The Jewel in the Crown
12:00—Islam in a Changing World

MONDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Hammerman
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)



Country Music, Saturday at 12:00 pm.

4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Riding High
5:30—Animal Show
6:00—Neighbors
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Hope & Gloria
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—The Health Show
8:00—Over A Cup of Tea
8:30—Country Music
9:10—Highway
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Dad's Army
11:10—The Jewel in the Crown
12:00—Islam in a Changing World

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Hammerman
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)

2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Skippy
5:30—Square One TV
6:00—Gillette Sports
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—A Whole New Ball Game
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Black Hat Chef
8:00—What Would You Do
8:30—Encounter
9:10—Hollywood Remembers
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Magaret Volant
11:15—Feature Film: *12:00—Islam in a Changing World*

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Johnny Quest
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Border Town
5:30—The Funder
6:00—Neighbors
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Step by Step
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Nature of Thing
8:00—The Upper Hand
8:30—Challenges
9:10—Kung Fu
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—A Woman of

Programs are subject to change by JTV



Amman cinemas

- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): The Juror
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): Air Force One
- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): The Peacemaker
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): Another 9-1/2 Weeks
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): Con Air
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): Murder 1600
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): Mr. Bean

M O V I E

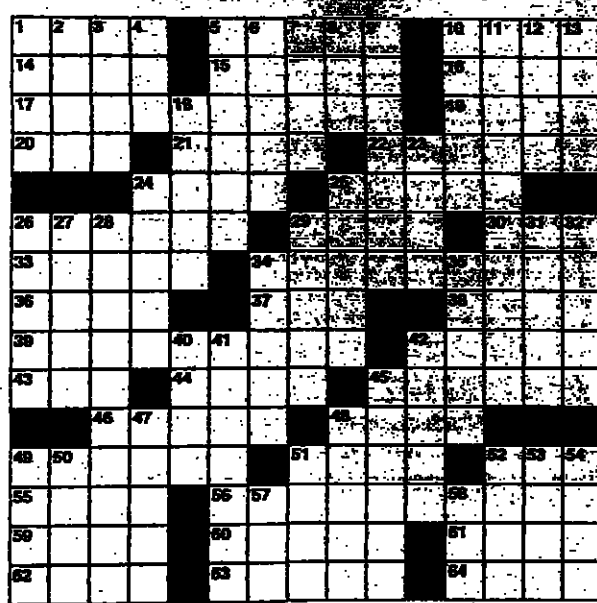


Deconstructing Harry

The film written and directed by Woody Allen, starring: Caroline Aaron, Kirstie Alley, Bob Balaban, Richard Benjamin, Eric Bogosian, Billy Crystal, Judy Davis, Hazelle Goodman, Mariel Hemingway, Amy Irving, Julie Kavner, Eric Lloyd, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Tobey Maguire, Demi Moore, Elisabeth Shue, Stanley Tucci, Robin Williams, Woody Allen and another 85 comedian actors.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS
1 Price
5 Place
10 Rho or rho and
14 Mollie
15 "Ghosts" author
16 Norse god
17 PDR
18 summer place
19 U.S. attorney general
20 Mine extract
21 Despoil
22 Poplar sandwich
24 Chute
25 What Kerrigan can do
26 Chaucer's inn
29 "It all—show"
30 Weight meas.
33 Sphere of

activity
34 Painful dive
36 Place
37 Accelerate
38 Surely open
39 Pugnacious
42 Look intently
43 Bullfight cheer
44 Most
45 Not refined
46 Hide for the future
48 Room divider
49 Thin covering
51 Evergreen
52 Scott Carson
55 Glistening material
56 Sing entertainers
59 Father
60 Poplar tree
61 Roadway

sign
62 Rocky cage
63 Lucifer
64 Fender
65 blarney
66 Honkies
67 Wild pigs
68 Toot
69 Clear soup
70 Disastrous
71 Paria, once
72 Meters
73 Mended shoes
74 Gorge
75 Rude
76 Mrs. Flintstone
77 Time gone by
78 Exchange
79 Excellent
80 Land map
81 High or deep
82 Religious image
83 Scout's home
84 Gull's note
85 Connective

DOWN
1 Chanel
2 Shell
3 A few
4 Gull's toy
5 Vulgar
6 Assists
7 Capt. for one
8 Doves etc. abbr.
9 Skin diver's gear
10 Singsong
11 Plush novel
12 Excellent
13 Jeff Bridges
14 Jim
15 Sordid
16 "Rider"
17 Jury group
18 Do a puzzle
19 Mr. (and man)

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THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: If you're a fire or air sign, best make your move now. The moon in Cancer throws a wet blanket on your enthusiasm.

Aries (March 21-April 19). Domestic responsibilities dominate. Unfortunately, they might preclude your doing something you'd prefer. The workload is intense.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). The more you know, the more you're worth. Soak up the information. Looks like your place is pretty busy. Don't let a friend's activities cost you money.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). You're powerful, charismatic and good looking. That almost makes up for the fact that there's still too much work. Luckily, money starts coming in.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). You're strongest now. It still won't be easy, but you can make your presence felt. There's a tendency for money to come to you.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Push hard to meet a deadline. No more excuses allowed. You're strong, vibrant and good looking. Push while you have the advantage.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Parties and work get tangled together, much to everyone's delight. There's too much work that really has to get out. The deadline looms and gets downright annoying. Luckily, you're powerful.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Just do what you're told. You'll make your own life easier by helping an older person succeed. Your friends come to your rescue. By doing the job together, you'll be more effective and have more fun.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Contact distant relatives and loved ones. Your conversations will open up new possibilities. An older person has unreasonable demands on your time. If you're getting paid, go along with the program.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Pool your money with another's to ensure there will be plenty for all. Travel looks excellent, if you can get away. An older loved one would enjoy going along.

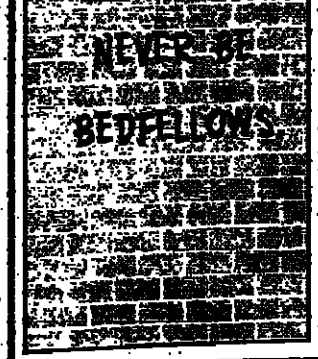
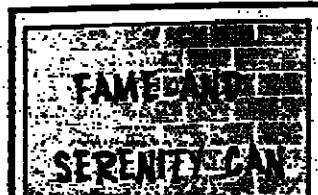
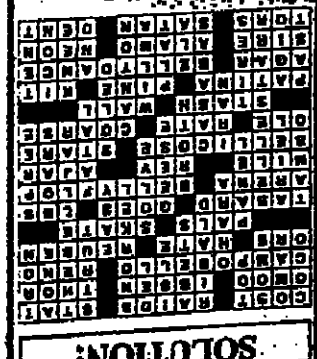
Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Toss the ball to someone with skills you lack. This is not cheating; it's wise. The money you need is available, although the interest rate may be high.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). A partner teaches you valuable tricks. The resources are what you'll want to share. If you put your money together with others, you'll all have a much better time.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Your sweetheart is under pressure. Offer comfort and cookies. Focus on work. There are things the boss needs done now that can't be put off any longer.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: Financial woes can be a thing of the past, if you apply yourself this year. Focus on saving the first part of the year, so you can take a great trip later.

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SLAPSTIX
A hero is no braver than anyone else; he's just braver five minutes longer.

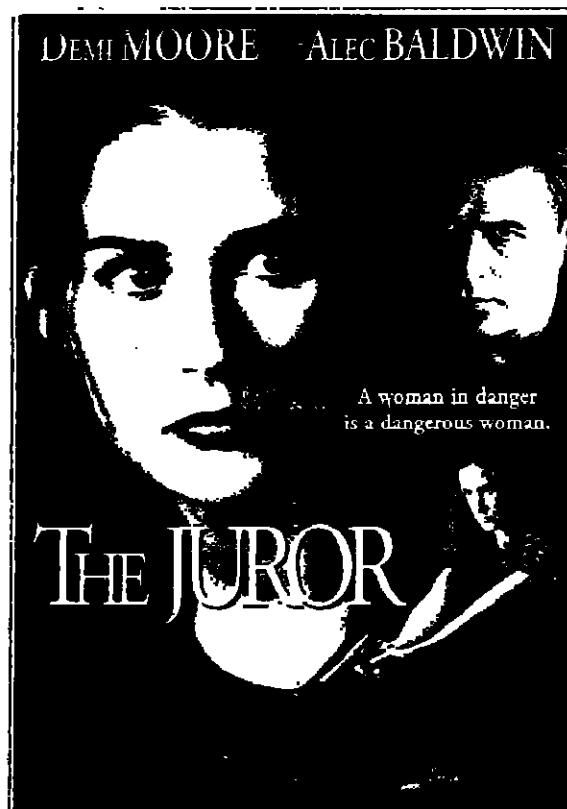
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TONIGHT

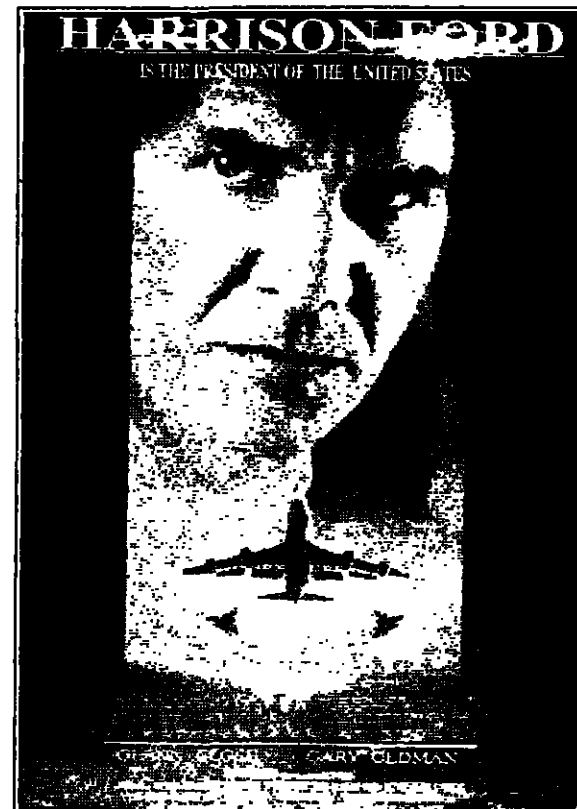
GALLERIA 1 *هائل جاري* GALLERIA 2

THE JUROR

AIR FORCE ONE



8.30, 10.30



2, 6.15, 8.30, 10.45


<http://www.arabia.com/Star>

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

La Jordanie au fil des mois

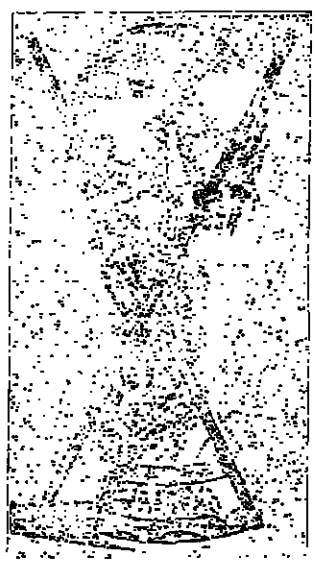
Toute la rédaction vous présente ses meilleurs vœux pour l'année 1998. À cette occasion, le Jourdain vous propose une rétrospective de l'actualité hachémite en 1997.

Janvier

Un accord à Hébron

Le 15, un accord israélo-palestinien est signé sur la ville d'Hébron. Il prévoit le redéploiement des forces de sécurité israéliennes de la ville. L'opération est baptisée « remise des clefs ». L'armée israélienne maintient des forces dans les enclaves juives où vivent 400 personnes entourées par une population de 120.000 Palestiniens, ainsi que dans le Cimetière des Patriarches, lieu saint commun au judaïsme et à l'islam, situé dans le centre-ville. La police palestinienne, elle, se déploie dans tous les quartiers d'Hébron à l'exception de ceux habités par les juifs. Néanmoins le nouveau pouvoir palestinien exerce son contrôle administratif sur l'ensemble de la ville. Cet accord est intervenu après la médiation efficace du roi Hussein qui 48 heures avant la signature a franchi le Jourdain pour rencontrer les deux parties.

L'accord d'Hébron envisageait également le démarrage de négociations sur le statut définitif des territoires palestiniens...



Avril Privée de Coupe du Monde

La Jordanie ne participera pas à la coupe du monde de football qui se déroulera cet été en France. L'équipe hachémite a été éliminée dès le premier tour des éliminatoires après deux défaites, un nul et une seule victoire. Déjà en 1985, 89 et 93, la Jordanie n'avait pas réussi à franchir cette première phase qualificative de la Coupe du Monde.

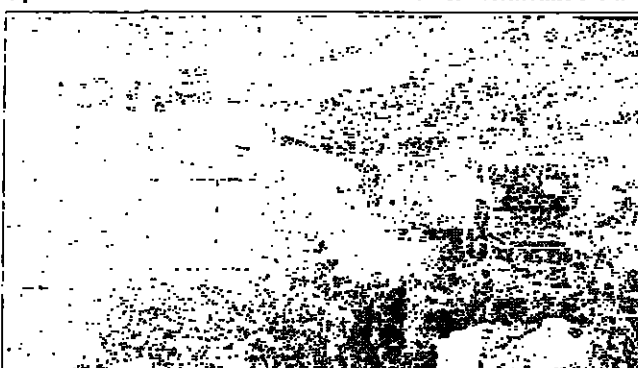
Février

Le roi gronde Netanyahu

Le premier ministre israélien Benjamin Netanyahu projette de construire une nouvelle colonie juive de 6500 logements (quartier de Har-Homa) sur les

hauts de Jebel Abu Ghneim, qui dominent la route de Jérusalem-est à Béthléem. Dans une lettre au ton amer et intimidant, le roi Hussein sermonne Netanyahu et lui reproche non seulement ce projet de colonie juive mais aussi le redéploiement « insignifiant » qu'il vient de décider à Hébron : « Les actions tragiques que vous avez entreprises m'ont causé une douleur réelle et profonde. Je perçois votre intention de détruire tout ce qui a été construit », écrit encore le souverain hachémite.

Ce nouvel accroche a conduit le processus de paix dans l'impasse. Les ponts sont alors coupés entre les deux parties. Cependant, malgré les protestations palestiniennes, les bulldozers sont entrés en action et les logements d'Har-Homa sont en cours de construction.



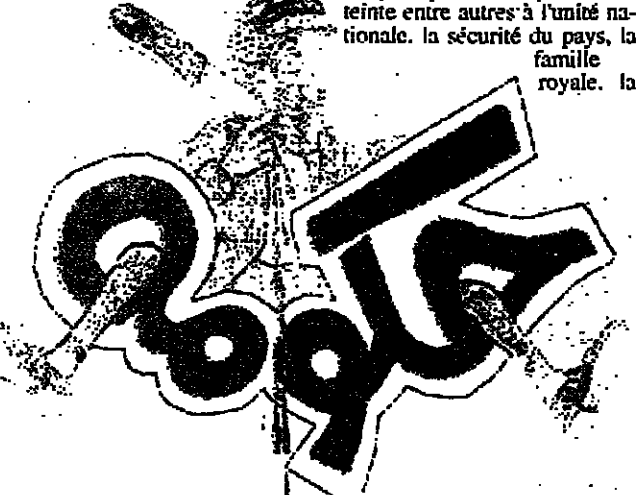
Mai

Une loi liberticide

Le gouvernement adopte une loi provisoire sur la presse et les publications. Le nouveau

code impose des amendes plus lourdes aux journaux qui publient quoi que ce soit portant atteinte entre autres à l'unité nationale, la sécurité du pays, la famille royale, la

religion, la monnaie, les bonnes mœurs, les dirigeants d'un Etat arabe, islamique ou ami. A cela s'ajoutent des conditions financières très strictes, notamment une augmentation du capital de 2000% pour les hebdomadaires. En septembre, ces restrictions permettront au gouvernement de suspendre 13 journaux d'un coup. Mais dès le mois de juin, la loi provisoire fait une première victime avec l'hebdomadaire satirique Abed Rabbo. Sa mascotte est poignardée en première page de son ultime édition.



Mars

La Jordanie, reine de Paris !



Lancement de la saison Jordanienne à Paris. Jusqu'en automne, expositions, conférences et concerts se succèdent dans la capitale. Les Français découvrent l'histoire, l'archéologie, l'économie, l'artisanat et les artistes du royaume hachémite.

Majali, le retour

Le 19, le roi Hussein accepte la démission du gouvernement d'Abdel Karim Kabariti et met fin à la « révolution blanche ». Dans sa lettre, le souverain critique vertement le Premier ministre, lui reprochant de ne pas avoir su conduire les réformes économiques et sociales qui s'imposaient. Kabariti est remplacé par Abdul Salam Majali, ancien chef de cabinet de 1993 à janvier 1995.

Une des fameuses statues d'Aïm Ghazal datant du VIII^e millénaire, découverte près d'Amman. Prêtée au Louvre par la Jordanie en échange de la restauration du temple de Zeus à Jérusalem.

Juin

Flonflons dans le train du Hedjaz

Et j'entends siffler le train... A l'occasion de la fête de la musique en France, le Centre culturel français d'Amman propose une sortie dans le vieux train du Hedjaz, qui reliait Damas à Médine au début du siècle. Guitares, flûtes ou tam-tam animent le trajet jusqu'à la gare de Mafrâq où les quelque 300 voyageurs profitent d'un concert crépusculaire.



C'est la vie

L'agenda culturel d'Amman

Cinéma

Jour de fête. Un film de Jacques Tati, non sous-titré (1988). Un facteur qui voit se préparer la fête du village, participe aux préparatifs tout en suivant un film et en essayant de livrer le courrier à l'américaine. Lundi 5 janvier au Centre culturel français.

Juillet

Les Frères musulmans disent oui au boycott

Le 9, les Frères Musulmans appellent au boycott des élections législatives. Le mouvement islamiste réclame plusieurs réformes importantes notamment un changement du système électoral « une personne-une voix », qui par le biais d'un découpage de circonscriptions inique défavorise les partis politiques au profit des tribus. Quelques jours plus tard, le Front d'action islamique, le parti politique sous influence directe des Frères musulmans, annonce qu'il ne participera pas au scrutin de novembre.

Dakamseh évite la mort

Le 19, Ahmad Dakamseh est condamné à la prison à vie et aux travaux forcés. Ce capitaine de l'armée jordanienne avait ouvert le feu sur des lycéennes israéliennes, faisant 7 victimes. La tragédie se déroulait en mars à Bakura, un territoire prêté par la Jordanie à Israël pour 25 ans selon le traité de paix. La sentence a été moins lourde que prévue. L'examen médical des experts a montré d'une part que le soldat souffrait de troubles psychologiques. D'autre part, Dakamseh était devenu très populaire dans l'opinion publique jordanienne. Soutenu par un comité de plus de 100 personnalités, il représentait un exemple de résistance à Israël, en contradiction avec le mouvement de normalisation de la paix souhaité par le régime.



Dans la « cage » des accusés, le capitaine Dakamseh discute avec son avocat.

Septembre

Affaire Mecha'al : le fiasco du Mossad

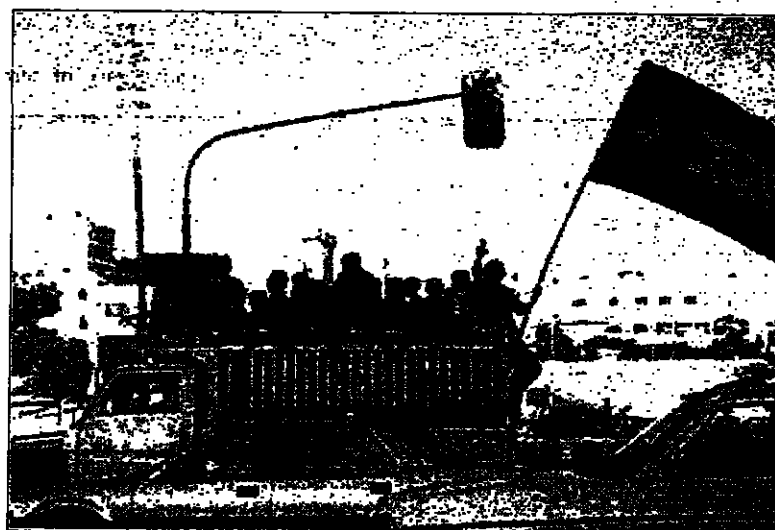


Le 25, deux faux touristes canadiens-vrais agents du Mossad tentent d'éliminer Khaled Mecha'al, chef du bureau politique du mouvement islamiste palestinien Hamas, dans une rue d'Amman. Ils lui injectent une substance chimique dans l'oreille gauche. Mecha'al tombe dans le coma. Grâce à l'intervention du roi Hussein, qui menace de rompre la paix avec Israël, la Jordanie reçoit l'antidote auprès des autorités juives. Le souverain hachémite obtient également la libération de plusieurs prisonniers palestiniens et jordanien et surtout celle du leader spirituel du Hamas, Cheikh Yassine, détenu depuis plus de huit ans en Israël. Le vieil homme est soigné à Amman avant de retourner à Gaza. En échange, les deux agents arrêtés pendant l'opération - le plus grand fiasco de l'histoire des services secrets israéliens - sont ramenés en terre juive.

Le Cheikh Yassine, avant son retour pour Gaza, entouré de responsables du Hamas dont Khaled Mecha'al (en haut à droite).

Viviva Jordaniani

Août



Explosion de joie dans les rues du pays. L'équipe nationale vient de remporter le tournoi de football des 8èmes Jeux panarabes en battant en finale la Syrie 1-0. Klaxons à tout va, coups de feu, parfois mortels, hystérie incontrôlable. Les Jordaniens oublient le processus de paix et leurs difficultés économiques, oublient aussi leur non-qualification pour la coupe du monde 1998. A leur retour du Liban où se tenait la compétition, les joueurs, élevés au rang de demi-dieux, traversent la ville suivis d'un cortège de fans en furie et sont félicités personnellement par le roi Hussein. La Jordanie goûte les plaisirs d'une vraie nation. Au cours de ces mêmes Jeux, les athlètes jordaniens ont remporté au total 40 médailles, un record.

Novembre

Plus de femmes dans la Chambre Plus proche de l'Europe

Le 4, les Jordaniens élisent leurs 80 députés. Les résultats consacrent la victoire du tribalisme et le recul de l'opposition islamique. Ils laissent entrevoir une Chambre plutôt docile au pouvoir et au gouvernement à la tête duquel demeure Abdel Salam Majali. Les femmes surtout sont les grandes perdantes de ce scrutin puisqu'aucune des 17 candidates n'a été élue, pas même Toujan Faïçal, la Circassienne, seule représentante féminine dans la précédente chambre, battue dans le 3ème district d'Amman.

Le soir des élections, Toujan Faïçal fait le tour des bureaux de dépouillement pour établir ses propres calculs. Elle ne pourra échapper à la défaite.



Le 24, la Jordanie et l'Union européenne signent un accord d'association qui doit être ratifié avant la fin de cette année. Après le Maroc, la Tunisie, l'Autorité palestinienne et Israël, le royaume hachémite est le cinquième partenaire méditerranéen de l'Europe. Cet accord prévoit une baisse significative des tarifs douaniers et à l'horizon 2010, il pourrait conduire à la création d'une zone franche. Les industriels jordaniens, même si certains craignent cette ouverture du marché, attendent beaucoup des technologies et des investissements européens pour améliorer leur productivité. Au-delà de cet aspect économique, le prince Hassan a engagé l'Europe à renforcer sa coopération politique notamment dans le processus de paix et la défense des droits de l'homme. De bonnes résolutions pour la nouvelle année.

Décembre

Un islamiste égaré en Israël



Mohammad Ra'fat serrant la main du speaker de la Knesset.

Le 18, deux députés jordaniens se rendent à la Knesset, le parlement israélien. Rien de surprenant de la part de Hamadeh Faraneh qui a souvent franchi le Jourdain. En revanche, l'acte du Cheikh Mohammad Ra'fat en stupéfié plus d'un, à commencer par ceux qui l'ont élu. Cet ancien membre fondamentaliste des Frères musulmans a été piébisclé dans sa circonscription du camp de réfugiés palestiniens de Baqa'a en condamnant le traité de paix signé avec l'Etat hébreu. Le 26, plus de 1000 personnes manifestent leur écoeurement dans les rues du camp et une pétition circule pour demander la démission du Cheikh « fautif ».

L'Irak, bourreau mais utile

Le 8, quatre Jordaniens sont exécutés en Irak pour trafic de pièces détachées. Cette justice sévère provoque la colère des Jordaniens et trouble les relations diplomatiques entre les deux pays. Le roi Hussein qualifie le geste irakien de « crime atroce » et déclare que son pays peut trouver son pétrole ailleurs. Depuis, les choses se sont calmées. L'Irak a suspendu l'exécution à mort d'un cinquième Jordanien, condamné pour les mêmes motifs. Par ailleurs, les deux Etats voisins ont signé, le 28, un accord permettant à l'Irak de livrer à la Jordanie en 1998 4,8 millions de tonnes de pétrole et de produits dérivés à moitié prix. Rappelons que depuis 1990, l'Ou autorise le royaume hachémite à importer d'Irak son principal fournisseur, plus de 70.000 barils de brut par jour. Ce contrat renouvelé montre en tout cas que les relations entre les deux pays ne sont pas si mauvaises que cela.

Le Jourdain, on y revient. Tous les jeudis dans le Star 645 380

Octobre Mort de Mounir Bashir

Un des plus grands poètes du monde arabe s'éteint en Hongrie à l'âge de 67 ans. Mounir Bashir, maître du oud, a permis à la musique arabe traditionnelle d'être reconnue sur la scène internationale. Cet humaniste, né en Irak et qui a vécu quelques temps en Jordanie, voulait bâtir des ponts entre les différentes cultures. Il joua dans plus de 50 pays et avait l'habitude de dire que « cent-cinquante langues se croisent, le public occidental adore le oud ». Nous pensons que nous devons chanter dans une langue étrangère or les Européens et les Américains ne s'intéressent pas à la langue mais aux expressions.

Angst back in fashion

By Peter Aspden

IT IS surely a reflection of a far-from-vintage year for pop music that some of 1997's most polished products were manufactured with loving care by figures who were considerably closer to the

receipt of their pension books than the genesis of their rock dreams.

Oldest and grizzliest of them all was Bob Dylan, whose desolate *Time Out of Mind*, his first album of new material for seven years, sounded as if he meant it. Recorded before his well-publicised

health problems, here was nevertheless the tortured soul into which we always hoped he would evolve, his anguish given a gorgeous, warm southern sheen by Daniel Lanois's production. But the sadness suited Dylan. Nothing, as Paul McCartney proved with his bland *Fleming Pie*, is so tedious as a middle-aged popster sounding at one with the world.

Ry Cooder went back to what he knows best: his Buena Vista Social Club, recorded in Havana with a clutch of Cuba's finest musicians, was graceful, easy, mellow music, recorded with scrupulous attention to detail and much love (a special mention for the evocative sleeve and exemplary CD booklet from the World Circuit label) a fine package all round.

By contrast, another of the over-50s club, David Bowie played tense and edgy to Cooder's laid back and funky. *Earthling* was inspired by the drum 'n' bass sound which has become a staple of the British dance scene; but what joy to see it manipulated with such expertise by an old master.

Bowie (remember Low, Station to Station) understands more about the interplay between rhythm, lyrics and melody than many a young pretender: if I were in Prodigy or The Chemical Brothers, I would be listening very closely. Both *The Fat of the Land* and *Dig Your Own Hole* were strong on aggression and aural attack, but lacked the variety and subtlety to last beyond 20-odd interesting minutes. That is always assuming you could get past Prodigy's opening "Smack My Bitch Up", an odious title for a song, whatever it is about.

After the snappy optimism of Britpop's finest moments, it was salutary to see angst come back in to fashion, most effectively in Radiohead's *OK Computer*. Here was a carefully-conceived, justifiably praised work, full of clever things but ultimately a little too maudlin for its own good. There were worrying signs of self-indulgence in this trend towards introspection, as a cursory listen to Depeche Mode's *Ultra* proved, but Radiohead seem better equipped than most to deal with the dangers.

Otherwise, most British bands were in trading-water mode. Most disappointing of all were Oasis, whose *Be Here Now*, a derivative mix of terrace anthems and

seventies stompers, capped with the dreadful "All Around the World", gets worse with every listen. Supergrass's *In It For The Money*, Portishead's eponymous follow-up to *Dummy*, Prefab Sprout's drippy *Andromeda Heights* had their moments, but failed to surprise.

Intriguingly, Oasis's one-time rivals Blur, having been blown away in the media-generated Battle of the Bands of a couple of years ago, have regrouped and emerged ahead of the game. Blur was a confident statement of a group going its own way: from the American-influenced grungy textures of "Song 2" to the plaintive, Hunky Doryesque "Strange News From Another Star", here was variety, melodic inventiveness and a more restrained humour.

The Verve's *Urban Hymns* made the mistake of kicking off with the group's strongest song, "Bitter Sweet Symphony", a reminder of what five minutes-plus of a strong riff can do. Thereafter, things went downhill, especially with the

laudably-intentioned but flabby "The Drugs Don't Work". There was plenty of promise there, but the album's length, at 76 minutes, made its highlights hard to pick out. A clear case of being generous to a fault. U2's *Pop* was another album supported by a strong single ("Discotheque") but which ultimately disappointed.

A surprise, and welcome, winner of the Mercury Prize was Roni Size Reprazent with *New Forms*, a title which was a throwback to the days when the great jazz masters advertised their musical innovation as they went along (*Birth of the Cool* etc). This was no coincidence: Size and his Bristol-based collective managed to blend drum'n'bass with long, improvisatory stretches of jazz, reggae and hip-hop to unique effect. Here at last was music with space in it, unafraid to experiment. It was to the Mercury jury's credit that they preferred *New Forms* to the only album to run it close, OK Computer, a strong signal that musical ambi-

tion would receive its just reward in a world fuelled by hype and outrageously inflated claims on behalf of mediocrity.

The most fun album of the year was Cornershop's *When I Was Born for the 7th Time*, a beguiling mix of Indian and trip-hop music which was the nearest thing Britain has come to the increasingly influential Beck. I defy anyone not to smile at the album's closing "Norwegian Wood" in Punjabi, a post-colonial chickens coming home to roost if ever there was one.

Finally, as the multiple-CD box set becomes an (expensive) fact of life for the ever-growing army of nostalgics and completists, a special word for The Beach Boys' 4-CD *The Pet Sounds Sessions*, an over-the-top but genuinely fascinating dissection of the making of a modern masterpiece. Good vibrations continuing to do their business in a variable year for pop. ■

Financial Times Syndications



The Spice girls got even spicier in '97



Bob Dylan

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THE STAR'S

COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

The browser and the operating system: Can they be separated?

By Jabra Ghneim

Special to The Star
I BELIEVE that the most important debate in the cyber world today is whether the Internet Explorer browser is an integral part of the operating system or not. I've heard so many 'dumb' answers to this question. Some answers came from people who claim to be experts in computer science. The silliest approach to answer this question though came from the judge handling the Microsoft case with the American Department of Justice (DOJ).

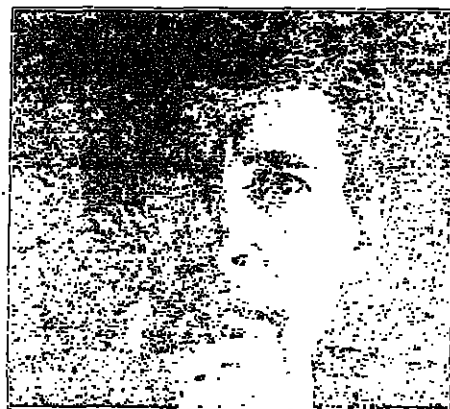
The judge wanted to test whether Windows 95 would be functional without Internet Explorer or not. So, he had his 'technician' completely uninstall Explorer from the system. Then he rebooted the system.

He reported that everything worked like before and thus Explorer couldn't be an integral part of Windows. Well, this approach to understanding the problem shows the lack of education regarding the concept of an operating system and what it does.

The operating system (OS) has many responsibilities. It includes multitasking, which means deciding when programs share CPU time and managing program run times.

The OS handles input and output functions including handling tape drives, printers, keyboards, etc. It also manages the process of writing and reading of data and loads programs into memory and

ensures they neither overlap nor interfere with each other's allocation of memory. The OS also provides an interface to computer networks which hides from applications programs much of the networks' complexity. OSes



also enforce security measures necessary to keep sensitive data secret. Finally, they provide tools for the housekeeping chores necessary to manage any computer system such as backup, monitor and adjust performance, and allocate scarce resources like disk space.

Where does an Internet browser fit in this picture? Well, it does many of these functions. Suppose you have an applet written in ActiveX or Java. Or even a whole application written in Dynamic HTML (DHTML). The only way and the easiest way to run these kind of applications (if you are a Win95 user) is by

using MS Explorer. You don't need any special plug-ins for much of this work since MS Explorer supports almost all of the web standards known to man. So, Explorer actually handles the Internet applications which we call applets. Of course, to perform this function it has to cooperate closely with the rest of the OS to manage the process of reading and writing data to disk. It is also a well known fact that, through the browser, users gain access to the mother of all networks, the Internet. And on an intranet users access corporate and company information.

By tweaking the IE browser you can enjoy safe browsing by disallowing malicious and dangerous Java and ActiveX applets from infiltrating the system. All these capabilities and the networked OS in performing its duties well. Add to that other abilities like aiding the user in viewing HTML content in a rendered format, that would otherwise be hard to read and enjoy using any other program unless you have a special extension or plug-in to your word processor for example. So, it is true that Windows can operate well without IE but it will lose all of its capability to network with the Internet or the corporate intranet. Critics would say that a Netscape or a Spy browser is capable of all of these functions. The answer is, of course they

can, but they have to download a whole bunch of plug-ins and extensions and tweak their systems till dooms day before they get it right. Besides, IE 4.0 for example supports things like DHTML and abides by the recognized International standards which is something Netscape failed to do in this case.

I add to all of the above the fact that many of the industry's observers fail to see the fact that the PCs will, in the very near future, be used in every aspect of our lives. Accordingly, the definition of an OS has to be expanded beyond the way we define it at the present. For many years, and especially since the Internet revolution, it has become harder and harder for users to think of an OS without thinking of its networking capabilities.

So, is Microsoft being monopolistic? I don't think so. It has a winning product by the testimony of many industry commentators and also the testimony of the one million customers who downloaded the product from Microsoft's site in the first week of its launch. Come to think of it, since when does a monopoly offer great free products? ■

email: Ghneimj@go.com.jo

Afak Accounting System, an Arabic package: Advanced features, all-in-one

SMART SOLUTIONS, a Jordan based software specialist, has launched Afak Accounting, a flexible accounting software package that is being received well by customers in Jordan and abroad.

Mr Ala'a Al Qassas spoke to *The Star* saying that, "Afak Accounting incorporates all the latest developments in computerized accounting systems, as we have been extensively upgrading its features to suit our client needs and demands."

"Due to our policy of comprehensive features, Afak can cater to user needs in all areas of accounting, inventory, invoicing, management systems and more," he added.

Apart from having all the required components of a comprehensive Arabic accounting system, what really makes Afak stand out as an Arabic accounting system is its reporting and financial statements.

Afak includes a Customer Map, whereby users can check out customers in every city, through which comparisons can be easily drawn between sales and accounts for every geographic area due to graphs that explain the situation; and through complete reporting on every account and its history.

Also, there is a Materials Map which allows for detailed tracking of the movement of every material. The System Administrator screen is particularly impressive as it has the ability to display all accounts (debtors, creditors, purchases, sales, inventory, etc) at the same time!

Another reporting tool allows the review of every account's movements in a



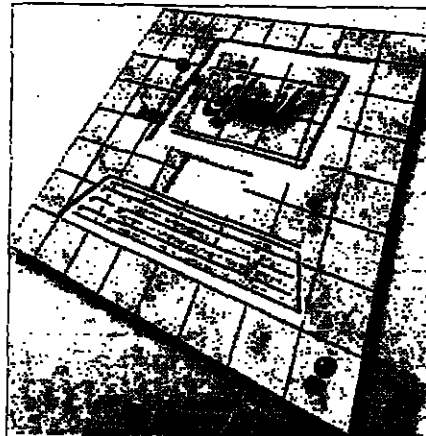
fixed time period. "Our reporting system is one that we are very proud of and it makes our product stand out when compared to similar packages," said Mr Al Qassas.

Advanced search facilities make it very easy for users to find a daily accounting transaction inside Afak.

In terms of flexibility and adaptability, Afak is very 'open' system. A good example on this fact is that it can be easily adopted for Point-Of-Sale solutions, working in conjunction with bar-codes.

Afak is currently being used in several countries across the region, including Syria and the United Arab Emirates. Afak Accounting System is available in shrink-wrapped form for Windows 95 or DOS.

For more information, contact Smart Solutions at telephone (962) 61 689880 in Amman.



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INTERFACE

ZEID NASSER

1997: What a year

AT THE end of every year, we take a look at the main events or aspects that characterized it as far as computers and information technology was concerned.

Looking back at 1997, there seems to be much to take note of on the local, regional and international levels.

Locally, 1997 was the year when Internet services exploded in the country. It was the year when three new Internet Service providers emerged (NETS, First Net, Index) and when Internet access rates dropped by at least two thirds!

In fact, with some of the offers made by a couple of ISPs, the Internet hour dropped in price to as little as small fractions of the local, regional and international levels. Also, the Internet Cafe craze emerged with some three cafes opening which offered paid Internet access to the public. Visitors could enjoy surfing the 'net' while they sipped a cup of coffee. Large organizations in the country went on-line this year, purchasing leased lines or adopting corporate intranets. Several Web-developer firms appeared and most have been really busy creating Web sites for an Internet-aware business community in the country.

It seemed that the buzzword of the year was Internet and that many, many more people were getting into the 'net' game. On the hardware front, Jordanians were treated to a new situation by which the latest PCs were available for much less than ever before. A raging price war between Jordan's computer suppliers benefited buyers who, towards the end of the year, could get a 200MHz Pentium, fully loaded with multimedia and modem, for under JD 950. Throughout 1997 it became apparent that the Jordanian market was very quick to respond to changes in specifications, as the latest Intel processors, fastest CD-ROM drives and almost every new piece of hardware made it into the market in a matter of weeks from its international launch.

This was mainly due to the fact that the region as a whole became much more receptive to the latest developments, as the Gulf markets grew as a major target area for international companies.

On the software front, 1997 was a quite year for our off-the-shelf developers, as very little was done in terms of new products. However, the size of tailored solutions and customized large systems provided by Jordanian programmers grew enormously, especially as most software experts in the country focused on exporting such experience.

The result has been a general expansion in software and development services in the country, aimed at the region's business community.

On the regional level, the Middle Eastern IT market grew and Dubai re-affirmed its position as a leading international center for trade and business. This benefited the region's IT business as it meant that the world's top computer and IT companies would come to the Middle East, setting up shop in Dubai, and better serving our local markets from a close range. What's more, the need to staff all the new IT operations in countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Bahrain has resulted in hundreds (if not thousands) of Jordanians becoming expatriates in those countries.

Taking a look at developments in the Arabic software industry, it has been marked by slower product introductions and less enthusiasm for new, exciting Arabic applications. It seems that the majority of main application types have been Arabized and their is little or no more space for competition with the likes of Microsoft or Sakhr in the field of Arabization of software.

Into 1998, Jordan looks set to enjoy more IT advancement. To all The Star's readers, and to all computer and IT enthusiasts reading this, we wish you all a Happy New Year '98; hoping it will be one computerized bliss for you all. ■

RAMADAN KAREEM

Ramadan

Celebrating the big feast in the Islamic world

By Ibtisam Awadat

Special to The Star

FASTING EXISTS in all religions, and believers search for forgiveness is

never ending. Every Muslim country has its own special characteristics which varies somewhat from one another. Ramadan is a holy month for all Muslims around the

world. In Russia, "Ramadan is a month which everyone waits for and respects. Muslims go to mosques to pray especially in groups" says Zaimal

Tourbulatov, a Chechen student who lives in Russia but is currently in Jordan.

"I found no major differences between the rituals in Jordan and in my country," however, Mr Tourbulatov continues, "in Eid Al Fiter, when everybody visits their friends and relatives, you are allowed to enter any house you want, all the doors are open, even if you don't know the people. You go and congratulate them."

In Jordan, Ramadan is a special occasion for the family, the father invites his married sons and daughters or his brothers and sisters for the *Iftar*. They eat together, and pray in groups.

"In our country, Bulgaria, 10 percent to 15 percent of the population are Muslims, and our traditions are similar to the ones that exist in Arab countries," said Peter Doyanov, who studies Arabic in the University of Jordan.

"One thing I remember distinctly—people in our vil-

lage gather around and everyone of them brings something from his house and cook communally," Doyanov says. Meat, potatoes, tomatoes are boiled together to become into a sort of soup, then divided among the villagers.

The wisdom of Ramadan is to feel with the poor and needy. That's why the people, especially the rich, should increase their contribution to charities. However, the most obvious in Ramadan is what is called "Maw'ed Al Rahman". It refers to the food provided to the poor who eat in groups in mosques, or through charitable institutions.

In Malaysia, "when Ramadan is announced, the army fires seven times by a huge canon and once to signal the *Iftar* meal," says Thoraya Bent Yahya. "In Ramadan we pray and read much more from the Holy Koran, the women prepare the food and desserts to send them to the prayers in the mosques usually once a week." The most popular deserts in Malaysia she says is *Indang* and *Bangka* *lanyang* which are made up of flower, sugar and nuts. However, the main dish in Malaysia is *Sate* which is very close to Kebab.

"In Eid Al Fiter, we eat a little then go to pray in the mosque, after that we visit our relatives, in this day children wait for 'Eideya', since every child receives an amount of money in a special envelop. The share of every child depends on his age and on the financial abilities of the donor," Thoraya adds.

In Saudi Arabia, "when Ramadan is confirmed, parents naturally go shopping to buy meat and other grocery



Dates are the traditional way to break the fast

ies," says Raed Zabady. "During the days of Ramadan children wander in the streets and knock at the doors asking people for *Greegaa*, a special kind of desert," Zabady continues.

Also in Egypt "Ramadan has a special atmosphere, when it begins, we carry lamps 'Fanous'. We walk the

streets repeating popular chorals about the holy month," Mohammad Ottoman says. "We still have *Al Misahara*, who goes out with a group of people after midnight to wake people up to eat before the start of the fast at dawn," Ottoman continues "I live near the desert, that's why some families, go out to the

desert after *Iftar*," Mr Ottoman continues, "in Eid Al Fiter, we go to visit the cemeteries to remember the people we lost. When we go back the women prepare lunch which is a very well known dish in Egypt, a fish called *Rashad*, then some dessert. ■



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Ramadan Delights
Chicken Musakhan
This week's dish for the Iftar meal is Chicken Musakhan from the Hotel Inter-Continental
Ingredients
4 chickens
1/2 kilo of olive oil
1 kilo of onions.
3 Arabic loaves or small sized *Tabbou* loaves.
Some *sumack*
1 spoon of assorted spices.
salt is wished.
Recipe:
1. Chickens are washed, cut into quarters or halves
2. Chickens are boiled with the addition of salt and spices.
3. Onions are skinned and chopped.
4. Oil is put in the pot and onions are added, then left on fire until onion is well-cooked and of good color.
5. *Sumack* is added to the oil and onion
6. Chickens are mixed with little onion and *sumack* and roasted in the oven well.
7. Roasted chickens are put on bread soaked with oil then some onion and *sumack* are put on chicken and a little pine - not is strayed on surface.
8. Served hot with salads and

HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL JORDAN